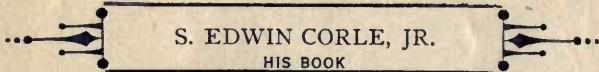


In the Shadow *of* Great Peril

Horace Atkisson Wade



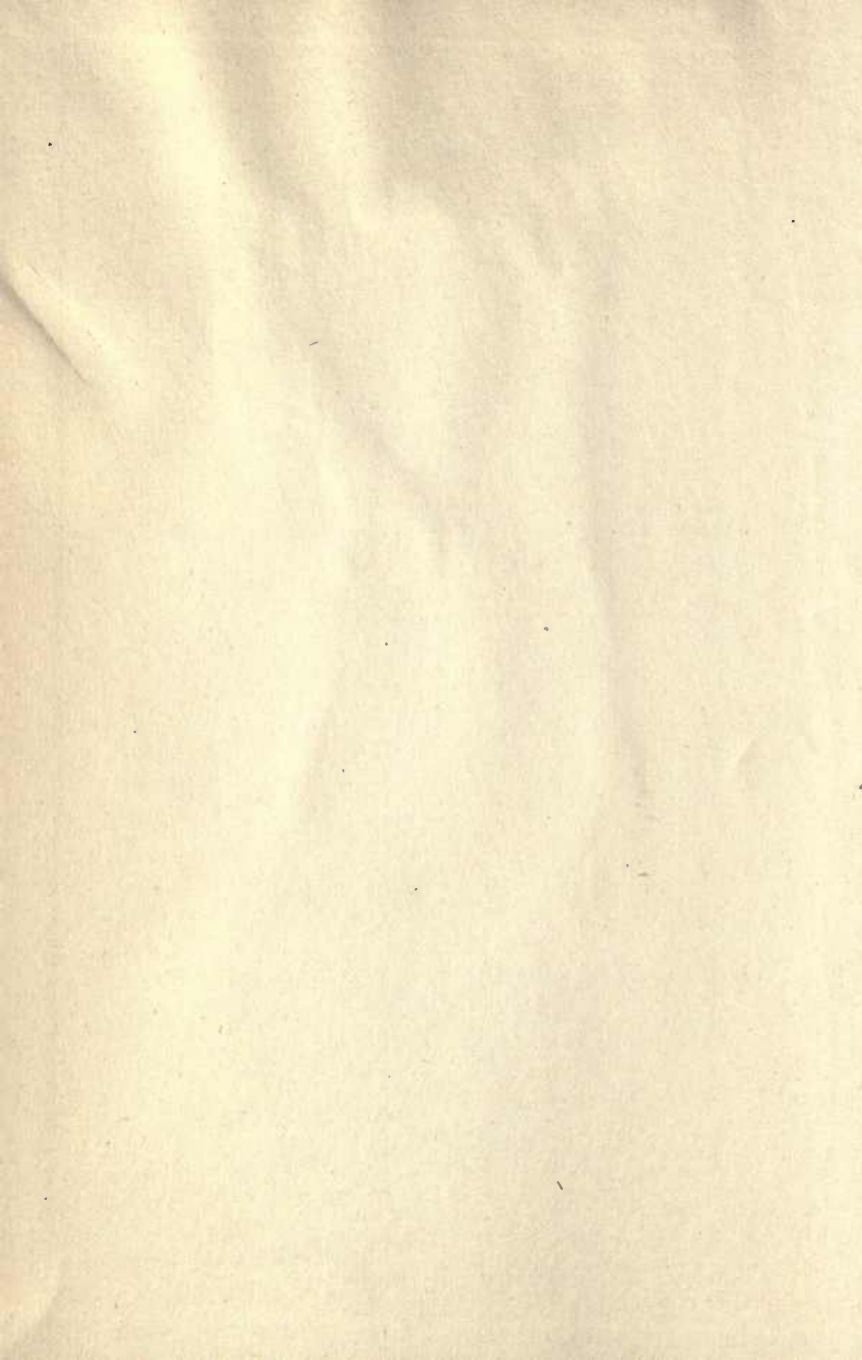
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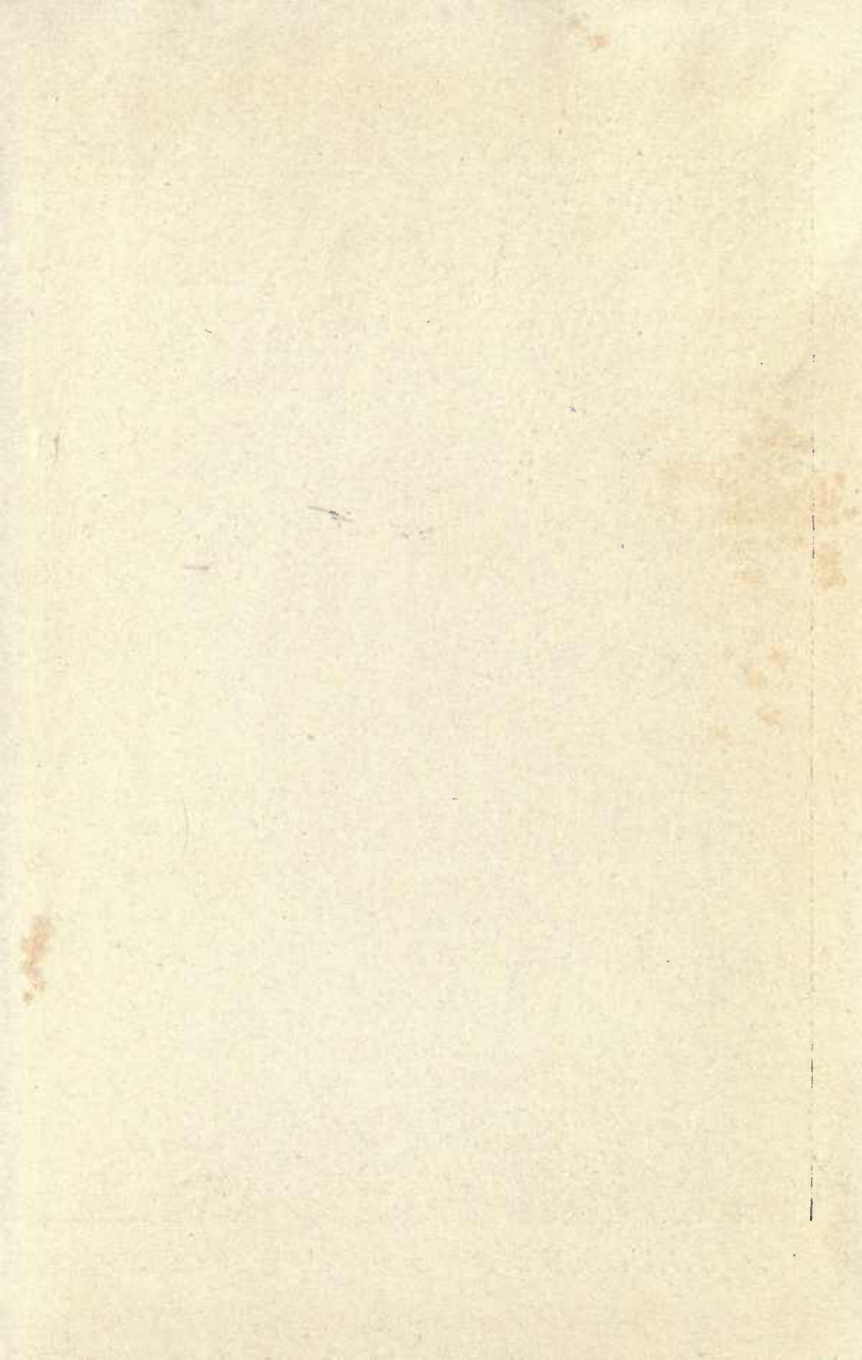
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**In the Shadow of
Great Peril**





Horace Atkisson Wade — America's Youngest Author

In the Shadow of Great Peril

By
Horace Atkisson Wade



Preface by
George Ade

The Reilly & Lee Co.
Chicago

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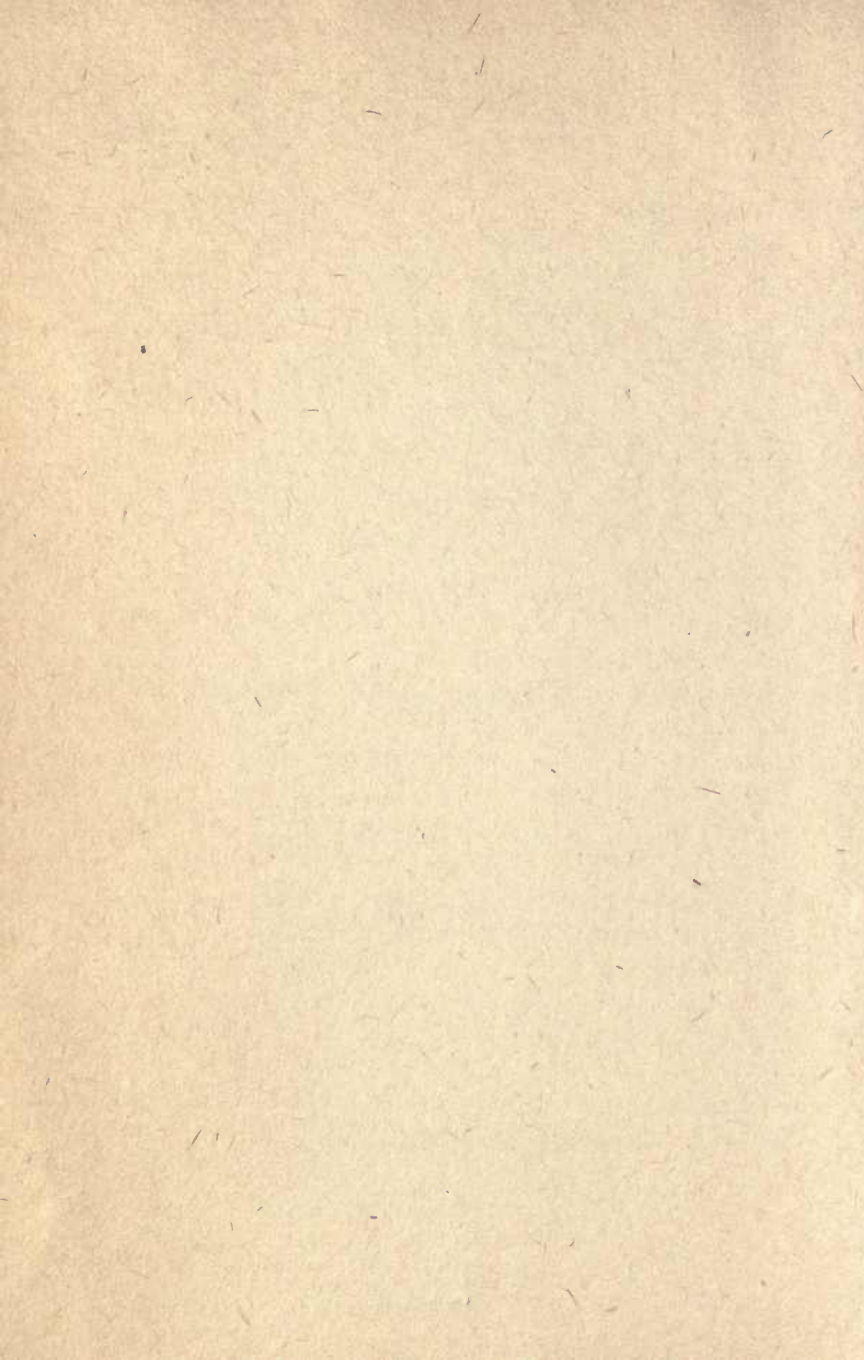
Published February 5, 1920
Second Printing

In The Shadow of Great Peril

This Book is
dedicated to
my friend
Glen Buck.

Horace A. Wade.

Chicago,
Jan. 8, 1920.



UPON MEETING YOUNG MR. WADE

IN the first place, there must be no ponderous unbending to our fellow-craftsman, merely because he is eleven years of age instead of being on a diet. Furthermore, there should be no apology for that southern manner of hospitality which sends one down the roadway to meet an author before he has arrived.

One style of preface is bumptious and condescending in that it unveils to the reader certain merits of the book which he, presumably, never would have discovered for himself. The purpose of this introduction is not to explain or defend a new author. He comes into our midst abruptly, but with all the delightful poise of the most recent model of Young America. He wears a football suit and needs no elderly protectors. He is an author because he chooses to be one.

Evidently he has weighed all the advantages and disadvantages of the literary career and come to an irrevocable decision. The fact of his consecration is made evident, because he con-

cludes Volume No. 1 with a very definite promise of Volume No. 2, including the title—which shows the sort of determination before which even publishers must yield.

Without trespassing upon the privileges of Andrew Lang, may not the writer observe that one of the glaring virtues of the succeeding narrative is the entire absence of what Mr. Howells would term "Rollo stuff." There could be nothing more un-Rollo. Master Wade's lads wear freckles and aim straight for the jaw with every punch. They speak the vernacular. They are fibrous, so to speak—heroic without being mushy.

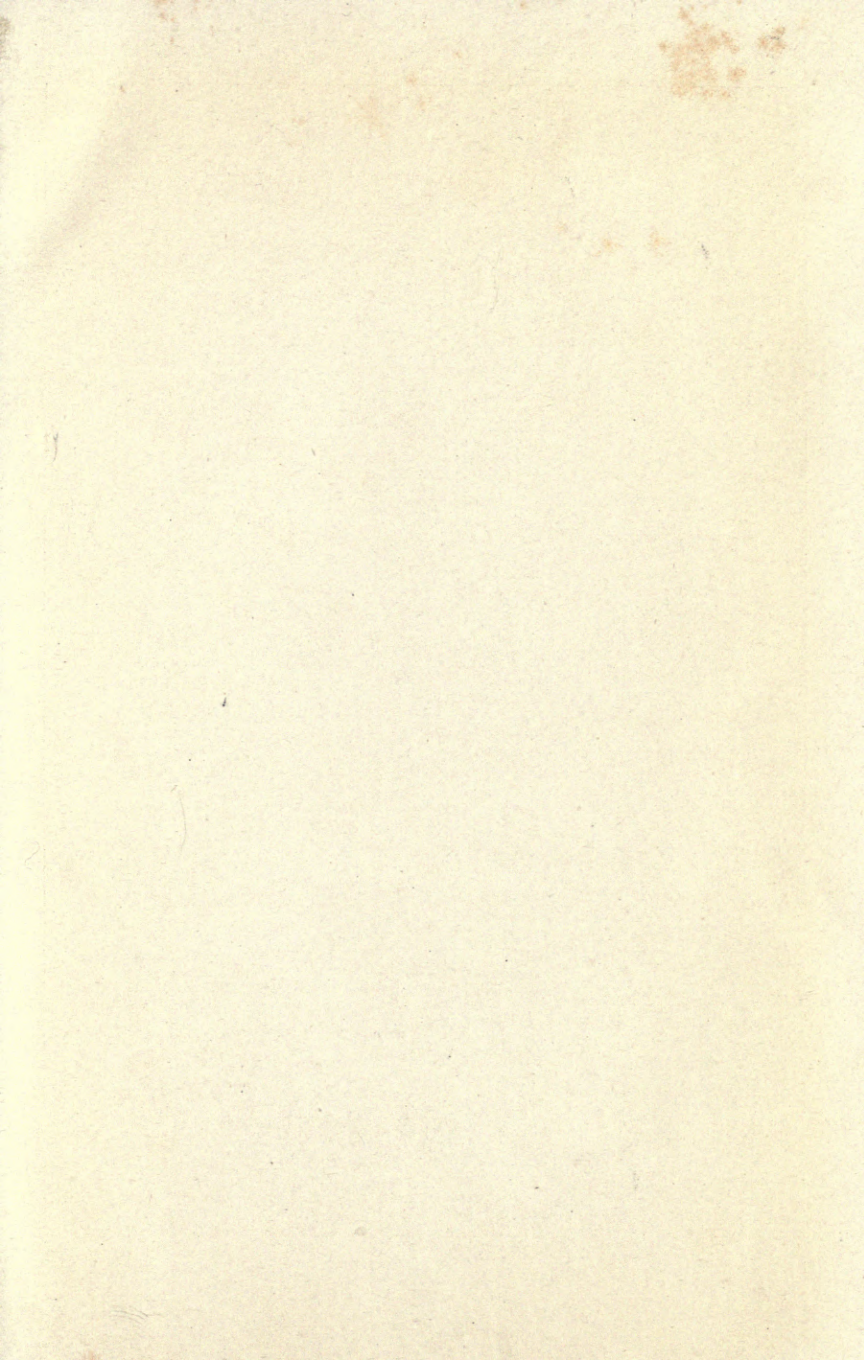
They are young persons devoted to action rather than moody self-analysis. They do not sit around a tea-urn and discuss topics which are remote from their mentalities. Their adventures are not held up by descriptions of weather and scenery.

They seek the strenuous days and ha-ha at danger—calm in the presence of their persecutors; modest in victory. They are fond of food and fighting—quite Anglo-Saxon, one might say. Regular fellows!

Serge Ade.

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164 cabin again. as they walked
along the peaceful quiet
was broken by a sharp
cry of "Help, Help" and it ended
with a groan!

XII

Outwitting a Robber ^{with his}
as that cry broke out the boys
stopped short in their tracks
and gazed at each other in
"Someone want's help and
we're going to give it to them"
said Bob, "the cry came
from over that way!" The
five boys all started the
way indicated by Bob
and were soon hurrying
along. After a walk of nearly
two minutes they came upon
a cabin. They crept up and
looked into the window
of that they saw made them
gasps for breath. For there
on his knees was an old
man and over him a
younger man was bending

In the Shadow of Great Peril

CHAPTER I

AT BLACKWELL HALL

"Blackwell! Blackwell! Blackwell! Blackwell Hall!" A jolly crowd of boys were coming down the road in a coach shouting this cry. They were just returning from the last game of football of the season and had won by a score of six to two, giving them a grand total of six victories and two defeats.

"Dick," asked Robert Morris, one of the boys, "I hope we win the cup again this year as easily as we did last time."

"So do I," agreed Richard Coleman; "are you going to try for the baseball team next year?"

"Yes, I am going to try for pitcher on the nine," replied Bob. "And I am going to play second base," said Dick.

"Oh, listen to the *darling* little boys talking

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about baseball already," sneered Sam Harding, "I don't believe they could catch a ball if they had to."

Dick half rose from his seat, an angry flush mounting his cheeks.

"Sit down Dick," cautioned Bob, "don't you care what he says."

Dick was persuaded to sit down, and then there came a flash of silence. During this time I will tell you something about Dick Coleman's and Bob Morris' history. They both lived in the small town of Spencerville, New York. Bob's father and mother were living, while Dick's parents had died when he was only a few years old. Mr. Morris had taken care of him and had developed them both into strong, healthy boys. Dick was fifteen years old; he had black hair and blue eyes. He was of the average height and weighed 117 pounds. Bob Morris was of the same age as Dick and had brown eyes and black hair; was of average height and weighed 120 pounds.

Let us now return to our story.

"There's Blackwell," called Charles Darwin, who was otherwise known as "Chuck."

The boys were soon driving into the yard and

were out of the coach before it had stopped. In ten minutes all the boys were in their rooms, and as Dick and Bob entered theirs, Dick turned on Bob and asked angrily, "Why didn't you let me pummel Sam? I am not going to stand there and be insulted."

"I don't want you to be insulted," was the reply from Bob, "but he just wants to get you into trouble, and then he can tell a false story about the fight. I heard him talking to someone and I heard that."

"I wonder why Sam wants to get me into trouble," murmured Dick, "I don't know of anything I ever did to him."

"Well," answered Bob, "ever since you stopped him from bullying that little chap he has had it in for you."

"I wouldn't stay there and see that little fellow bullied," flared up Dick, hotly, "and no one with any honor in him would."

"And I'll agree with you at that," said Bob.

"Yes, but there goes the dinner bell," retorted Dick, "and I'm as hungry as a wolf."

"I have no doubt about that," laughed Bob, "we're always hungry."

They went down stairs where there was a large table and sat down at their places. They ate everything that was set before them, which is customary with boys. In twenty minutes they were through, and as they were rising to leave the table Mr. Sumter, the captain of the Academy, motioned them to sit down, and then clearing his throat he said pleasantly: "Boys, I have some good news for you. In this football season you have won the silver cup by beating Warwick Hall by a score of seventeen points."

He sat down with a smile, and then there came a loud outburst of noise.

"Boys, boys," called Mrs. Carey, the cook of the Academy, "go outside with your noise or you will have the roof tumbling over our ears."

The boys went out into the open and then Chuck announced joyfully, "Just think! That makes the third time we have had the cup, one year after another."

They all stayed out for a half hour and then they went in to study. They were too restless to study much, and Mr. Sumter smiled to himself and then said, "I see that you are too restless to work so I'll leave you off this evening."

They all put aside their books with a sigh of relief. They went back into the school yard and stayed there until seven o'clock. The group started to dwindle, and then Bob and Dick went up to their room. They read books for awhile, and then Bob yawned and said, "Good night, Dick, I am going to turn in."

"I've just been waiting for you to say that," smiled Dick in return.

The two boys undressed rapidly and hopped into bed. In a few more minutes they were sound to sleep, and slept soundly all the night. They awoke early next morning and were soon dressed.

"Someone is out before us," said Dick, as he looked out of the window, "I'll bet I could guess who it is?"

"Who?" queried Bob, with a grin, as he sat down in a chair, which was beside the window.

"It is Sandy, Chuck and Fred," guessed Dick.

"Righto," laughed Bob, springing up.

Dick's answer was a laugh, and then after seeing that it lacked a half hour from breakfast they trooped downstairs and ran out into the yard. They saw the boys looking into the sky and they also glanced upwards and saw masses of black

clouds scurrying overhead. Just then their chums turned around and noticed Bob and Dick. They hurried over to them, and Chuck burst out: "Do you see all the dark clouds? That means snow or I'm not living."

"How do you know?" asked Bob, with a surprised glance at Chuck's face to see whether he was joking or not.

"My father told me how to tell about the clouds before we came here," answered Chuck.

Dick to show his joy turned some handsprings but ended by sprawling on the ground. Suddenly the sun was blotted out by a cloud, and then a few flakes of snow fell. It was soon falling in earnest, and then Sandy remarked, "My but I hope this keeps up all day." But he was destined to disappointment, for in barely ten minutes the sun was shining brighter than ever as though to make up for lost time, and the snow soon disappeared, but not before Dick had had his face washed. Just then an appetizing odor of coffee and pancakes came out to them and they hurried in to eat. The boys were through in twenty minutes, and after that as they were just about to rise from the table, Mr. Sumter, the captain

of the Academy, rose from his place and said:

"Boys, I'm called away for the day, and while I'm gone I will give you a holiday." He sat down with a smile.

A buzz of excitement ran around the table, but they soon rose and walked out to the yard, and Sam Harding said to Chuck:

"I don't see why Mr. Sumter has to go and leave the Academy for."

"Oh, think about something cheerful for once in your life," grinned Chuck.

Just then Bob and Dick were seen advancing and Sam turned on his heel and walked off.

"He's a sorehead," grimaced Chuck as they came up to him; and after the three chums had talked with each other a few moments he left also.

"Let's have a game of football," said Bob, as he displayed a football which belonged to him.

The two boys went into an open place and proceeded to kick the ball to each other. About in the middle of their fun Sam came up, and as the ball by mistake came over to him he grabbed it. "Kick the football here," said Dick, in a pleasant tone.

"Come and get it," replied Sam, with a sneer-

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ing smile creeping over his face. Dick advanced, but as he came near, Sam kicked the ball far down the field.

“What did you do that for?” asked Dick, as an angry flash came into his eyes.

“I’m not a slave, and I wasn’t going to throw it to you,” sneered Sam, as he started off.

Dick came in front of Sam and wheeling him around said in a crisp, clear tone, “Go get that ball.”

“I won’t,” said Sam, and his face grew as dark as a thunder cloud.

“Then I’ll make you,” replied Dick, quietly.

“Come and do it,” sneered Sam, as he threw off his coat.

“Dick,” said Bob, as he came up, “Don’t fight Sam, come on with me,” and he tugged at Dick’s arm.

“Leave go, Bob,” ordered Dick, “I’ll show this fellow that he isn’t the only one about this Academy.”

“Fellow,” said Sam, glaring at Dick with hatred, “I’ll show you how to call me ‘fellow,’” and his right arm shot out, hitting Dick square in the mouth.

CHAPTER II

THE BULLY DISAPPEARS

When Sam hit Dick in the mouth he expected to have Dick off his guard, but as his next blow was about to fall on Dick's head, Dick put up his guard and with his right arm jabbed Sam in the eye. Sam was frenzied to a white heat and he rushed madly into the fight. All Dick did for awhile was to stop the hurricane of blows that fell upon him. As he saw a break in Sam's guard he let both his arms fly out. One arm hit Sam again in the eye, half closing it, and the other connected with Sam's jaw, felling him to the ground. Sam would have had to give up right then had not Mr. Sumter come around the corner.

"Stand up," he ordered Sam, as his face grew gray, for fighting was not to be tolerated, and might end in a month's expulsion from the Academy. Sam came to his feet and Dick and him stood stiffly before Mr. Sumter.

"Who started this?" asked the captain of the Academy.

"Dick did."

"Sam did."

was the reply from the two boys. Mr. Sumter smiled to himself and then thought, "There's no need of asking who won. Sam's face tells." "Boys," continued the captain, "I'll give you till tomorrow morning to own up," and turning on his heel he left the two.

"So you have to lie to get out of it," sneered Dick, in disgust, as he turned toward Sam, only to find that that individual had walked off.

Dick walked over to Bob who was eying Sam in disgust.

"My, but he's a skunk," he declared, as Sam turned the corner of the Academy and disappeared. Dick, with a sad smile said, "I guess all that can happen is that I'll be expelled."

"Not if I can help it," vowed Bob angrily.

The two boys went after the ball and then brought it into the Academy. As they came out they met Chuck and Sandy.

"Hello Bob, hello Dick," they called, but on seeing the sad faces of both, they asked:

“What’s the matter with you, you look as glum as oysters?”

The story was soon told and Chuck’s voice snorted his disgust. At last Chuck said:

“If they lose you from the Academy they will be losing a good cadet.”

The boys strolled around the yard for three-quarters of an hour. After this Dick and Bob went up to their room, but in half an hour came down again and were met by Chuck, who said: “I’ve been home and my mother said she wanted you to come down and eat lunch with us.” Bob and Dick accepted and they started for Chuck’s home. As they were going out of the grounds Chuck stopped short in his tracks and then said to the boys, “You wait here, I am going back and bring Fred and Sandy with me.” He turned back and went up to Fred’s room. He softly opened the door and looked in but did not find anybody. As he turned to go out he heard a soft pit-a-pat on the stairs.

“That must be Fred,” thought Chuck, “but I don’t see why he has to walk so softly. I’ll just stay here and watch,” and going into Fred’s room he peeked out into the hall. As he looked

he saw Sam come creeping stealthily along. There was something in his hand which he clutched tightly. As Sam came by Chuck, he saw what it was. It was Mr. Sumter's valuable diamond pin. "I wonder how he got that?" gasped Chuck, and his breath was nearly taken away. He watched Sam with renewed interest. He saw him go up to Dick's room, and after making sure that no one was inside, he softly opened the door. Chuck stole up behind him, and soon Sam came out again and gazed nervously on all sides. Chuck had just enough time to burst into another room that was near by. Then Sam went down the aisle.

"What's the matter, Chuck?" asked a merry voice behind him, making that distinguished individual wheel around swiftly.

"Hello Sandy," grinned Chuck sheepishly.

"What's the big idea of all this?" asked Sandy, gazing curiously at Chuck, as though thinking he had gone out of his head. Chuck drew a chair up beside Sandy and told all he had seen. He finished off with, "I thought for a moment Sam had left the diamond pin on Dick's dresser, but I don't think he'd do that."

"That remains to be seen—and anyhow where did Sam get the pin?" and Sandy gazed triumphantly up at Chuck.

The two boys went up to Dick's room and opened the door. After a short search, Sandy opened a drawer in the dresser, and gave a surprised cry. Chuck hurried up to him and looking into the drawer also gave a cry of exultation. For lying in the drawer was Mr. Sumter's diamond pin.

"Sam put that there beyond a doubt," exclaimed Chuck. "I didn't think he would be as mean to do that, but he has only gotten himself into hot water. My but that fellow has a yellow streak through him."

They went down stairs and ran into the kitchen. Here they met Mrs. Carey, the cook.

"Have you seen Mr. Sumter yet?" they asked politely.

"No, but I got a phone call from him. He is at his home in Glenwood now."

The two boys walked out despondently. Outside they found Fred, and all three started to where they had left Bob and Dick. As they came near they saw them walking down the road

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kicking up the dust before them. As they turned around and saw the group they stopped and waited for them.

"Gee, I thought you'd never come," said Bob.

As they walked on Sandy pulled out his handkerchief, and in doing so the pin fell out also.

"You lost something, Sandy," said Dick, who had picked the pin up, and then with a startled exclamation he asked, "Where in the world did you get this?"

Sandy, on seeing the pin, called Dick to him and conversed softly for a few moments. Dick's face grew vivid with astonishment. As Sandy stopped he stared fixedly at his face, then he hurried up to the boys and told them all about it.

"I didn't think that Sam would do that," said Bob in intense disgust.

As they stood there, Sandy gave a cry and said, "Dick, I meant to tell you before, but I saw the fight, and if you need me I will testify in your behalf."

Soon after this they all went along with lighter hearts. In a little while they reached Chuck's house and were welcomed by a motherly looking lady. She embraced each of them, and gave Chuck

a big hearty kiss. The boys sat down in the parlor while Mrs. Darwin bustled around to get dinner ready. As the odor of ham and eggs was wafted out to them they could hardly restrain themselves from rushing into the kitchen to watch the meal being fixed. In half an hour Mrs. Darwin appeared at the door, which divided the parlor from the dining room, and with a smile she informed them that dinner was ready. A short while later they were all sitting down to a delightful repast.

"Now," asked Mrs. Darwin, "which one of you had a fight with Sam Harding?"

"It was Dick," chorused all the boys. Dick was made to rise, and when he did he stammered out, "Where—how did you know I had a fight?"

"Chuck told me," she smiled.

Chuck then told his mother what had happened during the morning. As he did so they showed her the pin.

"He must be a bad boy," she said, "and I want you to keep away from him."

"We don't go round much with him," said Chuck, as he smiled at the surprised look that was on his mother's face, "but what shall we do with this pin?"

“As soon as dinner is over, you go straight to Glenwood and give that pin to Mr. Sumter,” was the decided answer.

Soon after this the boys started to the railroad station and bought their tickets. They paced up and down the platform in their restlessness, and what added more to this was because the train was half an hour late. As the train stopped at the station the boys hopped on. They spent a restless hour, for this was the time it took to get to Glenwood. As the train came into the station they were the first out. With all the speed they could summon they ran to the captain's home. As they came panting into the front yard Mr. Sumter met them. He led them inside and they dropped down in chairs until they could get their breath again. In a few minutes they brought out the pin and showed it to him. “So you stole the diamond pin and didn't have nerve enough to keep it, eh?” said Mr. Sumter sternly. An angry flush came to their cheeks.

“No, sir, that's not true,” answered Bob, and here they told their story. Mr. Sumter stroked his chin for a moment and then said, “I believe you. Wait here for a moment, and I'll go back to

the Hall with you." He went out of the room, but soon came back with his coat and hat. They went to the station and just managed to get the train that they were to take for home.

In an hour they arrived at the Hall. They all went into Mr. Sumter's private office, and Mrs. Carey said that Sam was not feeling well and had gone to his room. He was summoned and came down stairs with a pale face and shaking voice. As he saw the boys his face turned ashen. He was questioned until he could stand it no longer and made a clean confession. He was given back his money and told to leave the school immediately.

As he started to go out his face whitened with rage, and turning upon Dick he said angrily, "You brought this on me, you confounded coyote, and I will get even with you," and with these threatening words he strolled out of the room with broad steps. The boys soon followed him, and as he went out they breathed a sigh of relief.

"We are through with him now," said Bob, but they were not by a long shot, for just as he had finished speaking a pistol rang out, Fred dropped to the ground, and a dark figure leaped over the wall!

CHAPTER III

STARTLING NEWS

The attack on them was so sudden that they were speechless for a moment, but as they saw the figure leap over the wall they awoke to their senses and darted off, leaving Sandy to take care of Fred. They made out a figure in front of them and started after him.

"He's going for the woods," said Dick; "get him before he gets there." The boys crawled up foot by foot, and were soon in speaking distance of the figure.

"Stop or we will get you," cried Bob as he gave a spurt. The figure turned and waved his fist at the boys and set off faster than ever. "That was Sam," blurted Bob; "we've got to get him."

The woods were near now and Sam gave a final spurt and reached them a good ten yards ahead of the boys. He turned around and gave one more mocking grimace and then burst into the woods. When the boys came they also burst into

them, but after fifteen minutes gave it up in despair and started for the Hall despondently.

As they were passing a tree something hit Dick in the back of the head. Dick glanced upward and looked all around and then his eye was attracted by a wad of paper. He pounced upon it as a cat pounces upon a mouse. He hastily unrolled it and read: "Don't try to find me or you'll get hurt. I have others to help me."

Dick showed it to the boys and they looked all around for a trace of Sam, but could find none, and once more started off for the Hall. As they entered the captain's office, he saw their crest-fallen faces and knew that Sam was not found. After the story had been told to him, the boys then asked how Fred was.

"He's all right," was the cheerful answer; "he was only hurt in the leg. He'll be all right in a week or so."

After this Bob gave a sour grimace and said, "I wouldn't care about Sam escaping, only that we might have passed right under the tree where he was perched."

"In his note he says that he has someone to help him—so force against force—we'll be ready

to help you whenever you need it," said Chuck, and a nod of approval came from the boys.

Fred had now opened his eyes and stared around him. They turned their attention to him, and Dick came awkwardly forward and said, "I'm the cause of this. That bullet was meant for me, and I am very sorry that you are the one that's hurt."

"Oh, bosh," smiled Fred, as he gave a twitch of pain, "you must be sick to talk that way."

They helped Fred up the stairs and brought him to his room, where they stayed all through the rest of the afternoon. As the dinner-bell rang they helped Fred down the stairs. He was the center of curiosity, and it was plain to see that they knew about the adventure of the afternoon. They crowded about him and made him tell the story again and again.

George Redney of all the cadets was the only one who scowled at the boys. He edged up to one of the boys that was listening and said, "I suppose that they'll think they are the whole cheese now."

"You wouldn't dare to say that before them," said the boy, as he turned coldly upon George.

"They're all fools, all of them," sneered George.

They all sat down at the table now, and in half an hour George Redney stole out of the room. When he had gotten out into the hall he felt in his pocket and brought out a piece of paper which had hand-prints all over it. It read, "I will meet you at the old wall. We'll get even with the whole bunch.—Sam."

"I'll get even with them all, I will," vowed George angrily.

He went up to his room and put all his things in a valise and then softly crept downstairs. Just as he came down, Sandy came into the hall.

"Hello, George, where are you going?" he asked in a puzzled tone.

"No place that concerns you," said George angrily, and scowled darkly at being seen. He walked out, and Sandy scratched his head and thought deeply.

"I wonder where he is going," thought Sandy. "I'm going to follow him."

He stole out after George, and after he had gotten a reasonable distance to the back of him, he took up the task of following George. He saw him go up to the wall and heard him give a peculiar

whistle. Scarcely had he finished when Sam came from the other side of the wall and they conversed together for a moment. Then shaking their fists at the Academy they locked arms and walked on.

"They are up to mischief," thought Sandy. "I wish I had the boys with me, but if I turn back now they'll get away."

After following them far away they plunged into the woods. Sandy could get closer now without being seen, and so he came up as near as he dared. After a walk of nearly forty-five minutes they came into a small clearing. A tent stood in the middle of it, and in the darkened entrance of it a fire could be seen.

"So this is their hiding place," grinned Sandy, as he got behind some brush, so he could not be seen. "Well, it won't be soon, if I can help it."

Just as he had gotten comfortably fixed, the same peculiar whistle that George had used came from the woods.

"Here comes Dad, Ted and Bill now," said Sam, as he answered them with a whistle. In a couple of moments two big, burly men broke into the clearing.

The man Sam had called Bill did not appear.

"When do we start to get even with those kids?" asked Ted Brown, one of the men.

"We'll get even with them, don't fear," growled George. "We'll show them who's who."

"So Sam has to get a crowd to help him," said Sandy to himself, "but we'll be ready for them—we'll be ready," and he gave a silent snort of disgust.

"Where's Bill?" asked Sam, as he gazed at the two men.

"Oh, hang that fool," swore Ted; "he wouldn't take the money we offered him. He said it wasn't enough, but we can get along without him."

They talked in light tones for a moment, and Sandy leaned forward to hear what they were saying. But it was a fatal move for our hero, for his foot stepped on a twig and his red hair bobbed up and down and Sam saw it. He whispered softly to George and walked into the woods. Sandy had lain still for awhile, but thinking that he was not discovered he looked at the camp again. George was sitting near the fire with apparently an unsuspecting look on his face. In a few minutes Sandy heard a light tramping behind him, and turning around swiftly he saw Sam advancing

cautiously. As Sam saw that he was discovered, he gave a whistle and leaped forward upon Sandy. George sprang up and dashed into the undergrowth. The two boys finally got Sandy down on his face, but not before a long tussle. George whipped out a rope and quickly tied Sandy's hands behind him. Forcing him to his feet they marched him into camp. The two men jumped to their feet and looked at Sandy, and then at Sam for explanations.

"This is one of those boys," said Sam, and he gave Sandy a push that sent him forward on his face, while the men laughed harshly.

"Maybe we'll get something from him," bitterly laughed Sam's father, as he picked Sandy up and stood him on his feet. For one moment Sandy thought of flight and gazed anxiously about him, but then with a sinking of his heart he realized that his hands were tied behind him, and that his enemies blockaded him on all sides. Sam noticed Sandy's anxious glances, and with a sneer said, "You won't get away from here in a hurry; we'll show you."

They cut Sandy's bonds and grimly ordered him to follow them.

This he did, and followed them for a couple of miles. Then they came into another clearing where a log cabin stood.

They bound Sandy hand and foot and brought him into the cabin and laid him on the floor. After this they went out, leaving Sandy in the shanty.

"He's all right. Now for the others," said Sam's father, as he lighted a cigarette and carelessly threw the match away. They then plunged into the woods, and soon left the clearing behind them.

After Sandy had been in awhile the smell of smoke came to him. After a few moments the smoke increased in volume and then Sandy thought, "Could they have been such villians to burn the hut with me in it?" and his face paled. Soon his thought came true, for Sandy saw a menacing flame. For the match that Sam's father had thrown away had fallen in a pile of rubbish and the shanty was on fire with Sandy inside of it!

CHAPTER IV

LIFE OR DEATH?

We will leave the boy in the burning shanty for awhile and return to the Hall.

“Sandy had better be hurrying back,” suggested Bob, “or he’ll never get here in time for study. He promised me that he would be back in a few minutes.”

The minutes dragged on and the boys could stand the suspense no longer. They hurried up to the top of the steps and waited there a little while. After this they went up to Sandy’s room and gazed in. What was their astonishment to find no one there.

“Oh, well, he’ll be here with us in time,” said Dick cheerfully, and they once more started down stairs. When the study period came neither Sandy or George were there. After Mr. Davidson, the professor, had waited patiently for them to come, he ordered two of the boys to go up and get them. In a couple of minutes they returned

and said they were not there. All the boys scattered around the Academy hunting for them, and when they once more assembled, with the information that they could not find them, this put a different light on the matter.

“Boys, I want you to organize a searching party and find Sandy and George,” said Mr. Davidson.

There was a buzz of excitement as they got their ballots ready, and when the results were announced it was found that all of our friends were to go. When they left, Mr. Davidson gave each a friendly slap on the shoulder and said kindly, “I’m trusting you to find your companions, and I hope that no evil has befallen them.”

“So do we,” echoed the boys, as they plunged boldly into the darkness.

Bob took out a box of matches and lit one. He searched around on the ground and suddenly gave a cry of exultation, and as they were all peering down at the ground the match flickered out. They scratched another and the boys saw some footprints.

“Those are Sandy’s and here’s George’s,” said Bob, pointing to them.

“Yes, you’re right,” said Dick, as he looked

closely at the footprints. Just then the match gave a final spurt and went out.

"We'll need torches if we want to do this kind of work," said Bob, as he struck another match. They found for themselves pieces of wood and plastered them over with tar. These they lighted, and they flared up redly in the night.

They followed the footprints until they came to the woods, and now they followed the trail by brush that was broken. After a long while they came into the clearing where Sandy had been captured.

"Someone has been here, and not so long ago either," said Chuck, as he kicked a glowing ember out of his path.

Suddenly Bob suspiciously sniffed the air.

"Can you smell the smoke?" he asked; "it seems as though there's a fire round here."

"There is," yelled Dick excitedly, and following his direction they looked into the sky. The fire cast a red glow against the horizon, and so could be seen easily.

They ran on towards the glow, and as they ran it got more vivid. Suddenly after nearly half an hour's run they came into the clearing where the

burning shanty stood. As they looked at it they heard a moan from the inside.

"Did you hear that," asked Chuck, startled, as he looked at the boys. Again came a low moan.

"That's Sandy's voice," said Dick with shaking tones.

"And he's in the burning shanty," finished Bob as his face blanched.

Just then they glanced at Dick again, and he said in a trembling voice, "There's only one thing to do and I'll do it." He peeled off his coat and vest.

"That's suicide," yelled Chuck, as he jumped forward to try and stop Dick before he took his mad rush into peril, for they all knew in an instant what he was going to do. He was a second too late, for Dick had rushed toward the burning shanty, and apparently unconscious of the danger surrounding him he dashed headlong into the darting flames. They lapped about him and the smoke hurt his eyes, but he kept on his perilous attempt at rescue.

His strength was fast ebbing out and he called faintly, "Sandy, where are you?" He heard a groan over to his right, so he changed his course

and stumbled along in that direction. Suddenly he tripped and fell flat.

After a great deal of difficulty he managed to rise and he bent over to see what it was that tripped him. After a second, with a leaping heart, he made out the figure of a boy. He tugged at it, for he was sure that it was Sandy. He moved Sandy a little, and then after a moment managed to grab him and threw him over his back. He staggered on with his heavy burden, and he grew weaker each moment.

It seemed hours before he saw the light of the outside, although in reality it was but a few moments. With a final spurt he dashed into the outside and then fainted dead away.

A few minutes later the shanty, which was now a wall of living flames, sank hissing to the ground. They waited for Dick to become conscious again, which he did in about half an hour. His first impulse was to glance at the smouldering embers, and with a shudder had visions of himself and Sandy lying under them. He then asked in a hoarse whisper:

“Is Sandy all right?”

“He’s been badly burnt, but I believe he will

pull through," said Chuck, whose father was a doctor.

After Dick had been laying still for awhile they started back for the Academy. Dick protested strongly against being carried, and Chuck let him have his own way. A queer smile hovered about his lips when Dick fell back again.

"Chuck, you'd better go back to the Academy first and get a doctor," said Bob. "Get your own father if you can."

Chuck dashed ahead and then Bob picked up Dick and Sandy gently and all slowly followed Chuck.

In nearly two hours they arrived at town and were soon in the Hall. They put the boys who were burnt under the doctor's care, who put salve and ointment on their wounds.

The next morning Dick was able to rise and move around, but was still a little stiff. During the middle of the day a blizzard started and the snow came down furiously. The boys' heads were jammed against the window-pane in Bob's room, as they thought of the fun they would have. The snow increased in fury and did not stop until late that night.

The next day was Saturday and Bob pulled his coat farther up over his face and with a shiver said, "My but it's cold—I'll be frozen stiff soon."

"And I don't blame you," said Chuck, who had just entered the room; "the temperature is only 15 above zero and steadily going down. They are skating on the lake today. Mr. Sumter said he went over and tested the ice."

The boys all gave a joyous yell and ran for their skates. They all went downstairs, helping Sandy because of his burns, and then giving a seat at the window to him they dashed for the pond. A little while later there were more boys there and then the fun went up to its highest height.

After nearly half an hour they all went up to one end of the pond and then skated back. Suddenly the ice that Fred was crossing broke and he was thrown into the icy, chilly waters. Dick, who was the nearest, threw his stick in the water and Fred clutched madly at it. They had all hurried up now and in a short while Fred was out of the water and lying on the ice. They rubbed his body to get the circulation started while Bob and Dick inspected the hole in the ice through which Fred had slumped.

"You said that the ice was thick," said Bob sternly, as he turned upon Chuck.

"I can't see how this ever happened," was the puzzled reply from Chuck; "I was pretty sure that it was thick." He looked all around the hole and suddenly gave a shout. To the astonished gazers he held up a knife.

"Here's the initials 'S. H.' on it—do you know who that is?"

After a moment's speculation Chuck again said, "It might be Sam Harding."

"I'll bet it is," shouted Dick, "but how did he get on the ice without us seeing him?"

"He must have come on while we were at the farther end of the lake," replied Bob.

"Look where it's cut, too," yelled Chuck.

Looking closely at the hole they could clearly see that the ice had been cut.

"Well of all the things," said Dick in an amazed tone; "my, but——"

But on one ever knew what he was going to say, for just then Mrs. Carey, the cook, came out in a flutter of excitement and said, "Boys, come quick; Mr. Sumter is lying on his face in the middle of his office and there's a pool of blood around him!"

CHAPTER V

THE MYSTERIOUS KNOCK

At this startling announcement the boys were rendered speechless for a moment. When the situation really came to them they all set off in a dash toward the Academy. They bolted into the office and bent over the prostrate captain, who was now showing signs of reviving consciousness. A short while later he opened his eyes and then a doctor edged his way through the crowd of boys. After a close examination he pronounced the wound not dangerous, thus taking a load of anxiety off the boys' minds. After having fixed his head he left.

"How did this happen?" asked one of the boys, excitedly.

Mr. Sumter began to tell his story to the boys and said: "I was writing at my desk when a man came in. He was dressed like a tramp and I asked him what he wanted of me. He then asked me if I had room for another pupil, and my answer was

'yes.' He questioned me about the cost and gave me a wad of money and said he wanted his son to be in the school for one year. I turned around and got his change for him, but as I wheeled around again I was confronted by the menacing muzzle of a gun. I also grabbed at a pistol, which was in one of my desk drawers, but before I could get it he pulled the trigger of his gun, and—that's all I know."

"Did he get your money?" asked one of the boys.

"Why, I had forgotten all about that—I'll see," and with this Mr. Sumter opened the drawer in his desk.

"Well, he got all that was in this drawer," he said ruefully.

"Not much, I hope," said Dick sympathetically.

"No, thank goodness, I put most of my money in the safe—he only got \$13."

"How big was the man?" asked Sandy, who had been silent up to this time.

"Why he about six feet three inches tall," was the answer of Mr. Sumter.

"Did he have black eyes?"

"Yes."

"A long nose!"

"Yes."

"Brown hair?"

"Yes," said Mr. Sumter, now getting excited.

"And discolored teeth?"

"Yes, I saw his teeth when he talked."

"And a scar on his right cheek?"

"Yes. Have you ever seen him?"

"I ought to have seen him," was the startling reply from Sandy; "that's Sam Harding's father."

"Sam Harding's father!"

The exclamation came from all of the small group of listeners.

"Yes," continued Sandy.

"I guess that Sam means trouble," said Dick quietly, "but we will be ready for him at any time."

There were no more adventures that day nor Sunday, but when Monday came Bob and Dick met a group of sad boys out in the corridor.

"Why, boys, what's the matter?" they asked with puzzled voices.

"Haven't you heard?" asked Sandy; "Chuck has scarlet fever. Mr. Sumter broke out with it

first, and then Chuck caught it from him. If anybody else catches it the Academy will have to close."

The morning passed slowly and tiresomely, and when the afternoon came three more boys were reported to have been added to the scarlet fever list. All the boys moved around slowly and despairingly.

That night there were seven more on the scarlet fever list.

"Well," said Fred, as he hung his head, "school closes tomorrow. I heard the health officer say so."

The boys went into their rooms with a gush of sadness coming over them. Early the next morning all the boys were packed and ready to start for home, as soon as the word was passed. Around nine o'clock the health officers came and shut up the Academy.

As they passed out of the gate, Dick looked back at the Academy and said solemnly, "It seems as though our best friend has died."

There was a short silence, and then Dick asked, "What are you going to do this winter, Fred?"

"I don't know," was the rueful reply from

Fred; "my parents have gone to Europe, and I suppose I'll go to a hotel."

"Bob, come here a moment," said Dick; "I want to speak to you."

The boys held a whispered conference for a moment and then joined Fred.

"Why don't you come home with us and spend the winter?" said Dick; "we'll all be glad to have you."

"Are you sure it will be all right?" asked Fred, as a bright look came over his face, replacing the dull one.

"Of course; come along," said Bob, laughing.

"Well, I'll go then," said Fred happily.

The boys soon reached the train and in a short while were speeding off toward home. They reached Spencerville a half hour later and they all got off.

"Where do you live?" asked Fred, as he looked around the platform.

Dick came to the rescue and said, "We live six miles out of town on a farm."

They engaged a horse and buggy and were soon riding off towards home. After a long ride they saw a neat little cottage before them.

"Here's where we live," said Bob, as he jumped out of the buggy.

They were soon at the door and rushed into the house. Mrs. Morris came to see what was the matter, and when she saw the boys she was speechless for a moment. After finding her breath she exclaimed, "What are you doing here?—I thought you were at school."

"We'll tell you all about that later," said Dick, "but right now we all are hungry as wolves."

"Why I should have known that," said Mrs. Morris with a smile; "that isn't a surprise, for you are always hungry. Just go out to the woodpile and cut me some wood, and when you come back I will have something for you."

The boys were soon at the task of cutting wood, and after cutting a boxful they hurried back into the house.

A few minutes later they were sitting down to an appetizing meal of ham and eggs, flapjacks and honey.

"You are one of the best cooks I've ever seen, Mrs. Morris," said Fred to that distinguished person. Mrs. Morris just gave him a hug and an extra dish of flapjacks. When the boys had eaten

all they could hold they rose and went outside and showed Fred around the farm. Then they returned to the house.

"Why, hello boys!" exclaimed Mr. Morris, who had come in while they were showing Fred around the farm.

"Why, hello Dad," called Bob, as he rushed forward.

They sat around by the fire, and then Mr. Morris asked, "Tell me some of your adventures, boys."

All the tale was told and Mr. Morris stroked an imaginary beard for a moment.

"That Sam ought to be put in jail," he said.

"That's what I'm thinking, only we haven't anything real bad against him," was the answer from Bob.

Mr. Morris soon went to the farm-yard and the boys followed. Barely had they gotten into the fresh air when there was a jingling of bells and two or three sleighs came up the street gliding over the snow.

"There goes the men on their snow trip," said Bob, as he gazed after them.

"What about this snow trip?" asked Fred, puzzled.

"Oh they are going out on a hike to the woods, and are going to stay there all winter," was the answer.

"Why, why, can't we go to the woods and spend the winter?—it would be fun," broke out Fred.

"By cracky," yelled Bob, as he jammed his fist into the palm of his hand, "you are right about that. I'll ask mother."

In a few moments he came out with a shining countenance and said, "She says we can if dad agrees."

They ran into the farm-yard and here they found Mr. Morris.

"We want to ask you if we can go on a winter hike — we'll be gone about two weeks — can we go?" queried Bob, anxiously.

"Boys, I don't see why you couldn't; nothing will harm you," answered Mr. Morris, as he went into the house.

"How did you think of that?" asked Dick joyously, as he pounded Fred upon the back; "we'll have some fun now."

"Where are we going to stay?" asked Bob; "we need a place to live in out there."

"We'll ask Mr. Morton," said Dick, after a

moment's speculation, "to rent us his place out in the woods."

"That's just the thing," and they all started for Mr. Morton's house.

After a long walk they came upon another farm house. They went up the stairs and rang the bell. It was opened by a pleasant-faced man, and to their question he replied: "I'll rent it to you for nothing if you promise to keep it in good order."

They eagerly promised, and then hurried down the stairs again.

"Now the next question is: when do we start?" asked Fred.

"We'll start next week," said Bob; "we need some time to get fixed up."

As they started off towards home, Dick gave a surprised cry and asked, "Why not ask Sandy to come with us—the more the merrier, as the old saying is."

After arriving at home, they hitched the horse to the buggy and drove off towards town. When they reached there they immediately went to the telegraph office and sent a telegram to Sandy. In a little less than an hour the return message came in over the wires.

"He can come," shouted Bob joyously, as he tore open the envelope and read the contents; "listen to what he says:

" 'Will be with you tomorrow.—Sandy.' "

The boys went home and all that day planned on the fun they were going to have. Next day Sandy arrived and there was a happy meeting. The rest of the week was spent in getting ready for the trip. When Monday really came the boys were all ready for their proposed outing. They had hired a sleigh to carry their provisions for them and this was already on its way.

Early in the morning the boys started and hiked for two or three hours, and soon came into a clearing in which a large log cabin stood. They went in and saw that all their provisions were there. They fixed up things for awhile, and when they had finished Sandy mopped his brow and said, "I'm going out and look around."

When Sandy had gone, Fred asked joyfully, "Don't it seem good to have a place where you are not going to be bothered every other minute?"

Scarcely had the words come out of his mouth when a couple of loud knocks came on the door!

CHAPTER VI

UNWELCOME VISITORS

"Sandy has just gone out. I wonder why he is coming back so soon?" said Bob, as he rushed to the door and drew the bolt.

The door was pushed open and a man, an utter stranger to the boys, stepped into the room and glared around.

"Get me something to eat," the man ordered roughly.

"Pretty good customer to deal with," whispered Fred to Dick.

"What are you kids whispering about?" inquired the man suspiciously; "get me something to eat, and be quick about it," and with this he pulled out a gun and held it in his hand.

"Now get busy," he scowlingly ordered. The boys would have rushed the man, but when they saw the gun, and looked into the man's hard features, they decided it was best to obey orders. It took them only a few minutes to fix something and

they gave to the man who ate it ravenously. After this he ordered the boys to fix something for him to take away. The boys were going to refuse when they saw Sandy sneaking up from the back.

"We'll fix you something," said Bob hastily, and turned quickly around, but keeping Sandy in eye-sight. All at once Sandy hit the floor as hard as he could, and the man turned around. Quick as lightning, Bob was running for the man's feet, and the man turned again to see what was happening. He was knocked to the floor and the gun slipped from his grasp. Sandy grabbed for the gun and when the man rose he was confronted by the menacing muzzle of it.

"Don't be careless with that gun, or it might go off," said the man scowlingly.

"It would be better for you if it did go off," grinned Sandy.

"Sit down," he then commanded.

The man sat down sullenly, and the boys set to the task of tying him. When the man was securely tied the boys started to fix up their own lunch. They untied the man's hands and gave him something more to eat. After that they went out leaving Bob to take care of the cabin.

"Leave me out of this, and I'll give you ten dollars," cried the man artfully.

"Keep your breath," laughed Bob, "and don't try that on me."

In an hour the boys came in and then Dick took care of the prisoner.

"Our friend has been offering me money to let him escape," laughed Bob to his chums.

"He might as well save his breath," laughed Fred.

The afternoon wore on quickly and then the boys fixed supper.

The night soon came on, and the boys went to bed. The next morning they were all up early, and were soon dressed.

"I wonder how our prisoner is getting along," grinned Sandy slyly. Sandy, Bob and Dick went into the other room and were met by a great surprise. *The prisoner was gone!*

The boys were then interrupted by a cry from Fred. They hurried to the door and Fred pointed to the ground.

"Somebody has been here last night," muttered Fred, for on the ground were tracks that could not have been there very long.

"I just wonder who it was?" asked Sandy in a perplexed tone.

They closed the door and went inside the cabin again. They fixed breakfast, but during the meal Dick was silent.

"Cheer up, Dick," grinned Fred; "what's on your mind?"

"I can't understand why the boys who untied that man never took any food."

"Dick, you're crazy!" exclaimed the others in one breath.

"I may be mistaken," was the answer, "but until I have proof that it wasn't a boy I'll stick to what I've said."

"If they were boys, have you any idea who they were?" asked Fred.

"Yes," was the decided answer.

"Then who was it?"

"It was Sam Harding."

"Sam Harding," exclaimed the boys in one breath.

"Yes, and George Redney was with him."

The boys were silent for a minute and they could not have been more surprised had a bombshell burst among them.

"If that's true, I would like to know what Sam and George are doing around here," blurted out Bob at length.

"Well, we are as near solving that question as we were before," grinned Sandy, "so I move that we go outside and do something."

They went out and had a snow fight, and when they returned to the cabin a few hours later they were as hungry as bears. After eating dinner they went back into the woods.

"Let's try and get some fresh meat," suggested Dick; "I'm getting tired of canned goods."

This suggestion was met with howls of approval, and the boys went back into the cabin. After polishing the guns until they shone like the sun, the boys started.

"I'm going to get a rabbit," cried Dick with delight. They walked for a ways and then separated. Dick soon saw a rabbit and he shot it. He walked a little farther and then saw something that looked like a cat. He shot at it, but the bullet only grazed the wildcat's shoulder, for that was what it was. With a ferocious yell the animal jumped at Dick. Before Dick could shoot again the wildcat was upon him.

"Help! help!" called out Dick as loud as he could. In a few minutes he heard a trampling in the brush, but not until the wildcat had scratched him several times. In a few seconds Fred broke in on the scene, closely followed by Bob and Sandy. Bob raised his gun and pulled the trigger. Bang! and the wildcat fell over dead. The boys started to their cabin while Dick limped along behind. When they reached the cabin they found the door open.

"I know that I closed this door tight," said Fred, "just before we left."

"Maybe you were mistaken," suggested Sandy; "come on in." And the boys followed him into the cabin.

Fred happened to go to the cupboard just then, and made a startling discovery.

"The provisions aren't here," he cried.

"Not there!" exclaimed the boys excitedly.

"No, they are not here. Somebody came in while we were gone and took them."

The boys were silent for a moment and then Bob rejoined. "Boys, we can't starve. Let's go to town and get some more food—the walk will do us good."

"I'm too shaken up to go now," said Dick, "so you go to town while I stay here and take care of the cabin."

In half an hour the boys jogged off on their way. A while later Dick went to the window and looked out.

"My," he muttered to himself, "it looks like a blizzard."

As he kept looking at the sky it kept getting darker and darker. All of a sudden some snowflakes fell. They were soon followed by others, and after five more minutes there was a regular blizzard raging.

"I hope that Bob and the boys find a place to stay," murmured Dick.

In half an hour the snow was coming down so thick that he could not see a foot ahead of him. Dick was getting worried as the moments passed, but suddenly there came a sharp knock. "That's them, I suppose," said Dick joyfully. He went to the door and opened it.

But instead of the boys entering, the man they had held captive but a short time ago stepped into the room.

"So we meet again," he sneered.

CHAPTER VII

LOST IN THE BLIZZARD

Returning to the boys who started for town.

“Look at that sky!” said Sandy.

They looked toward the sky for a moment and then Bob said, “It looks like a blizzard, so we had better hurry.”

The boys quickened their pace and started off at a brisk walk. As the sky grew darker and darker, Sandy said, “Boys, this is going to be the real thing; I’m going to try and find shelter before it’s too late.”

They looked on either side of them but could see nothing. In a few more minutes the snow started to fall and the boys ran as fast as they could. The snow came down faster and faster, but soon the boys saw something that looked like a dark mass of wood. They ran still faster and soon saw the outlines of a cabin.

They knocked at the door of the hut, but no answer came to them. After knocking at the door

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a few times more, they took the liberty of opening the door and looking in.

"No one here," said Fred; "let's go in."

They went in and saw an old table standing in the middle of the room. There were four old chairs sitting around the room, and Bob said, "One thing about this place is that they don't use much style."

The boys went to the cupboard and opened it. Inside they found a pile of food.

"I'm going to fall to," grinned Sandy, and started to dispose of a loaf of bread. When they had eaten their fill and had put the things away again, they heard a noise outside.

Looking out Bob saw some men and boys coming toward the shack. After gazing at them for a moment, Bob cried, "Hide some place, quick."

"Why——" started Fred.

"Hide quick before they get here," and without saying a thing more Bob ran for an old closet. The boys got into the closet and closed the door. In a few minutes they heard someone say, "That's a bad storm to be out in."

"Why that's George Redney's voice," whispered Sandy, startled.

"Boys, look here," said Bob after awhile, and he pointed to a hole in the door. They each looked through it and could see George Redney, Sam Harding's father and another man.

"That's a tough gang," said Bob; "I wonder where Sam is?"

The boys listened a little longer and then heard their names pronounced.

"They must have it in for us," laughed Sandy softly.

"They surely had, and I would rather put myself to the mercy of the snow than to the mercy of these crooks," said Bob, "and here goes."

He walked softly to the other side of the closet and opened a window. He soon got out and was also followed by Fred and Sandy.

"Gee, it's cold," shivered Fred, putting his hands down in his pockets for warmth.

They went on their way to town again—half stumbling, half walking.

"I can't go much farther," said Fred; "I'm tired out."

"We are near town," encouraged Bob, "so try to go on a little more." He then added, "Gee, the snow is so thick you can't see a foot ahead of you."

They walked on a while longer and then Bob said, "I can't understand it. We should have been in town a long time ago."

No answer came to him and he turned around and tried to peer into the white mass of snow.

"Fred! Sandy!" he called anxiously, but the wind choked his voice so it could not carry far. Bob turned around and retraced his steps, but he could not do this much for the snow blew into his face and cut it and the wind blew him back. He stumbled along and soon saw a black object in front of him. Hope grew high in his bosom as he cried out, "Is that you, Fred?"

"Yes; is that you, Bob?" came the joyful answer.

They were soon embracing each other and then Fred asked, "Where's Sandy?"

"I don't know," said Bob, "I thought he was with you."

"He's lost, then," said Fred sadly, "but we'd better be going on."

They groped their way onward and soon Bob stumbled over something.

"Fred, come here," he called. He was joined by Fred and they both looked at the snow.

“Why, that’s Sandy,” said Fred; “how did you ever find him?”

“I just stumbled over him,” said Bob, “but I wonder if he’s dead?”

“I hope not,” said Fred.

They got down on their hands and knees and picked up Sandy. They stumbled along with their burden and soon came to a spot where there was not much snow. They laid Sandy on the ground and worked over him for five or ten minutes. They were at last rewarded by seeing the red come back to Sandy’s cheeks. He soon opened his eyes and looked around.

“How did I get here?” he asked in bewilderment.

“We brought you here,” replied Bob joyfully.

“Oh, I remember,” said Sandy, “I got so tired I just gave in.”

The boys built a snug shelter from branches of trees and went to sleep as it was getting late. The next morning they started out early, as the snow had stopped. After a short walk they came upon a small town. They asked the first man they saw if he knew the way to Spencerville.

“Well, I calculates I do,” he drawled; “it’s

about five miles down that way," as he pointed west.

After thanking him they set out again and in two hours they came to Spencerville. They went to the grocers and bought their things.

"Well, Bob, going home to see your mother?" asked Fred.

"Well, no; I don't want her to hear or know about this. She might make us come back home and they'll be no camping trip."

The boys soon set off again.

"I think one of us had better take the provisions and go alone," said Bob; "if Sam's bunch gets us we don't want them to get our food again."

"And I agree with you there," said Fred, and Sandy willingly agreed also.

Sandy took the supplies and hurried on, and it was lucky for them as later events will prove.

The others walked on farther and soon Bob said, "I feel as though someone is following us."

They looked around but they could see nothing. As they turned to go in a different direction, two men jumped out of the woods behind them and soon had the boys overpowered.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TABLES TURNED

Returning to the cabin in the woods.

As the man they had held captive entered the room Dick was so surprised that he stood rooted to the floor. When he had overcome his surprise he asked:

“What do you want here?”

“What do I want?” echoed the man; “I want food and shelter, and I’m going to have it,” and then he continued, “If anything happens I’ve somebody with me,” and he beckoned to someone who was at the door, whom Dick had not noticed there before.

“So I’m here,” sneered Sam angrily, for he was the one the man had beckoned to. “So I’m here. You don’t seem glad to see me.”

As Dick remained silent the man said, “Now get us something to eat.

Dick went towards the pantry and took what little there was out.

"You're welcome to all we have," he said, smiling.

The man took the food that Dick had given to him and he and Sam devoured it ravenously.

After they had finished eating what little there was the man took out a black bottle which smelled of whiskey.

"Here, Sam, won't you take a little? It won't hurt you."

"Well, I don't care if I do," said Sam, who did not really want it but did not want to refuse the man and maybe anger him.

Dick turned his eyes away from them, for he could not bear the sight.

All were silent for a moment and at last there came a noise at the door. The man pulled out his gun and warily approached the door. Dick hoped that it was his friends, for then he knew that he would be safe. The man threw open the door and someone stepped into the room. The door was shut again and then Dick noticed that it was George Redney who had stepped in.

"How did you know that I was alone?" demanded Dick; "you wouldn't dare come if all of us were here at the same time."

"All of you will never be here again," laughed George, "your three comrades perished in the snow."

"You don't mean it," said Dick, a shudder of horror going over him.

"Yes I do mean it," said George.

Dick sank down in a chair and rested his head on his hand. It may as well be said here that tears appeared in the boy's eyes as he thought of his comrades lying dead out in the snow.

All was silent for a minute, and then George said, "I never forget to bring my food along."

Dick started when he heard this and clenched his fist. George took some packages out of his pocket and soon there was an abundance of food lying on the table. They fixed their breakfast and then gave Dick some. After breakfast was over Sam said, "Hadn't you better tie Dick's hands and feet, he might get away." This they did.

The others soon started to talk.

"So Bill we got you at last did we," asked George, "I thought you would come to your senses by and by."

"I never came until they gave me the money I asked for," admonished Bill sharply.

"Well you're here and that's all we want," said Sam, "and I'll admit that these kids are going to have a hard time with you."

"They certainly are," boasted Bill, "a man isn't paid for nothing nowadays, and money don't come in any time you want it."

"I should say it don't," echoed George, "but I wonder what Ted and Sam's father are doing now."

"Oh, dad," grumbled Sam, "I suppose he's playing cards. That's all he's ever doing. He earns enough money from gambling and won't give me a cent, hang him."

"I think he gives you enough," returned Bill sharply, "and shut up about it."

Sam grumbled and slunk away.

As time went by Dick asked himself, "did George tell the truth about Bob and them being dead. I won't believe it."

With that thought his heart grew lighter. The day passed and at night, as the snow started to come down less fiercely he wondered where they were.

They were awake early next morning and Dick's thoughts were of his chums. His break-

fast was brought him and then he asked them what they intended to do with him.

"We are going to first get all of you, and then we will sell you to some bandits in the mountains and they will hold you for ransom," sneered Sam.

"Held for ransom." My, but those words sounded awful.

"You wouldn't dare do it," Dick said with a shudder.

"Why not?" asked Sam, sneeringly.

Just then George came up and hearing part of the conversation he said, "I hate those kids, but if you dare to ransom them while I'm with you I'll blab the whole thing."

This threat silenced Sam and he stole away into the other room. Dick's bonds had been loosened and he asked, "Will you shake, George?"

"Shake, I won't," angrily said George, as he walked off.

Sam soon came up to George and said, "You're mighty good and smart, you think."

"You have to be smart in this group of out-laws," was the answer.

"Why don't you try for the ministry?" asked Sam angrily.

"I may, some day," came back the cold answer.

"You think you're an angel," said Sam in disgust.

"Look here," replied George, "I've stood enough from you. I'm going to quit, and that's all there is to it."

"You yellow-faced hound," snapped Sam, but the sentence was never finished for George's fist shot out and Sam found himself measuring his length on the floor of the cabin.

He slowly rose and walked off, while George sat down and picked up a book.

Dick was near George and he saw that it was a Latin reader.

"Why in the Hall he was way behind in Latin and never would study it," he exclaimed softly to himself, "I wonder what has come over him."

George went on studying as though nothing had ever happened, but inwardly Dick was getting a growing admiration for George and secretly wished that they might be friends.

Dick gazed around the room and then asked, "You've got a guard at the door, you might as well let me walk around."

"I don't see any harm in it," said Bill.

Dick then went to the window and looked out. First he saw only the woods before him, and in a few more minutes he saw a boy hove into sight.

"That's Sandy!" he exclaimed joyfully.

Sandy came along and soon arrived at the cabin. He knocked at the door and the man was instantly on the alert. He cautiously opened the heavy oak door and then Sandy stepped in with his arms full of provisions.

"For the love of Mike," he startingly exclaimed, "Sam Harding! George Redney!"

He turned hurriedly toward the door, only to see the grinning countenance of Bill staring at him.

"Hello, Sandy!" called out Dick happily.

The two boys were soon in a joyful reunion. Just then they saw George pack his things and go over to Bill. After this he went to the door and left.

"What's the matter with George?" asked Sandy, "he acts crazy."

Dick told him all and Sandy expressed his opinion that he hoped George would turn over a good leaf.

While they were thus talking Bill came up to

them and said, "Say young kid fork over those provisions you got there."

Sandy reluctantly handed them over, as he knew they had the drop on him. Then Bill went over to Sam and whispered to him for a moment. After this he came back to the boys and said, "Tomorrow we will take you to the mountains for ransom."

CHAPTER IX

HELD FOR RANSOM

Going back to Bob and Fred.

As the two boys were seized and thrown down they were more astonished than hurt. They came to their senses only when two burly men were sitting on top of them.

“What do you mean by using these high handed methods on us?” inquired the boys angrily.

“We’ll show you what we mean,” was the answer.

They forced them over on their stomachs and then tied their hands and feet. They picked the boys up easily and then threw them over their backs. After this they started off. The boys marvelled at the men’s strength, for they carried them as though they had been dolls. After a tramp of one or two miles they came upon a large mountain and started to climb it.

They went higher and higher and soon came to a narrow ledge. They walked carefully along this

and then started up again. In a short while longer they came upon a clearing and in it stood a group of small tents and four large log cabins. As they advanced into the clearing a man, who seemed to be the leader, came forward. He was a short, fat man and had ear-rings hanging from his ears.

"What do you want here?" he asked surlily.

"We want to sell you these boys," was the answer, "you'll get a good reward for them."

The boys knew now why they were brought here.

"I'll give you \$200 for them," he bargained.

"No, no, you can get a couple of thousand—that won't do."

"I'll give you \$400."

"\$500 or nothing."

After trying to keep the price down the man finally consented.

"All right then, \$500," came the unwilling reply, and the boys were handed over while the men received their money.

They were brought to a log house and locked in. In about half an hour there came another buzz of excitement from the outside and someone was thrown into the room next to them.

"Let's break down this wall and get to the ones

that were thrown in just now and may be we can all find a way to get out," said Bob.

They threw their whole weight against it and it shook and quivered. After two more turns they heard it giving a little. Once more they threw their weight against it and they fell headlong into the next room. They got up and rubbed themselves and then looked at the occupants of the room. As they looked they uttered a gasp of excitement, for sitting on the floor facing them was Dick and Sandy.

"Dick! Sandy!" they exclaimed in one breath, "how in the world!" but explanations would come later.

There was a happy reunion in the next few minutes and then the boys were called upon to tell their adventures. After this was done Bob said, "That isn't what we broke in here for. We have to find a way of escape."

"We should wait until tonight," replied Fred, wisely, "we'll fix a way now and tonight we'll take that avenue of escape."

This was voted a good way, and they set about to find means of getting out. Scarcely had they started, when a key rattled in the door-lock and

the door opened. It was one of the attendants that came into the room.

"How did you get in here?" he asked Bob and Fred. But one glance around the room was enough to convince him now. He went out leaving them alone, but in a minute he came back with two stout boards. These he nailed over the spot that was broken.

"Now you can all stay here," said the man, as he went out.

After he had gone they tried again to find a way to escape. But toward six o'clock they gave it up in despair. The same attendant brought them their meals, and after he had gone they dozed off and went to sleep. They woke about midnight with a start. Someone was tampering with the lock. Soon the door swung open admitting the attendant. He walked over to them on tip-toes and in a whisper told them to go with him.

"Shall we go?" the boys asked one another, "may be this is another trap."

"We may as well go," replied Bob, "we can't be any worse off than we are now."

The boys followed the attendant and soon they came to the outskirts of the camp. There was a

fire here, and drunken men were snoring all around them. They passed them, taking care to keep out of the glow of the firelight. They soon reached a narrow mountain gully. They passed across and were soon at the other end.

They started down a little farther, and then in the darkness of the night they could see a man's figure looming up in front of them. They grabbed for his feet and he came down on his hands. The force of his fall made him gasp for breath and so he could not yell for help. When he recovered he found a gag in his mouth and he was bound hand and foot. Leaving him they walked on farther. Soon a horseman dashed by them, a few feet away.

"My but it's getting hot," said Fred, joyfully, "this is how I like it."

"We had better hurry," said the attendant and there was change in his voice. From a man's it changed into a boy's. Dick took a long look at him through the gloom, and then burst out with: "Why you're George Redney!"

"What of it," answered George, "but come with me. We must hustle if we want to get away from the outlaws."

They walked on farther, but suddenly a dark figure loomed up in front.

"Who are you?" he asked, trying to peer through the darkness at them.

"We are searching for the boys who escaped," George said, "don't you know me?"

"Then go ahead," the man replied.

The group went on, and George said slyly, "That's the way to get by, they all know me."

They were not stopped again, and they reached the bottom of the mountain in safety.

"Follow this road and you'll get to your cabin," said George, hastily, and he broke away in a run, without another word.

"I guess George is a pretty good sort," said Bob, warmly, "I wonder why he turned over a good leaf?"

Dick told about the way George did in the cabin, and by the time he got through they came upon their log house. They went in cautiously and finding that no one was in, advanced more boldly. They went to sleep and did not wake until late the next morning. They ate their breakfast and then Bob said, "Don't it seem good to be together again?"

"It sure does," laughed Sandy, gazing proudly at his chums.

After this they did their daily chores. Fred went out to the woodshed to cut wood, but soon came back, saying excitedly:

"Boys, hide. Here comes the outlaw bandit with three of his men."

CHAPTER X

THE OUTLAWS BALKED

Even during this the boys did not lose their heads, as most boys are apt to do. Bob motioned them over to him and said quietly, "We can hold them if we want to."

Then the boys each got a gun and went to the door, for the outlaws were still far away. The boys hailed them, and in answer to their hail the four men raised their fists with threatening gestures and said:

"We bought you, and we are going to have you, too!"

"Come and get us then," said Fred, smiling, and tapping the barrel of his gun.

"Oh, so you will fight will you," said their leader, "then take that," and he pointed his gun at them and pulled the trigger.

The outlaw's horse gave a swerve just as the man fired and the bullet whizzed over their heads. The boys ran for the cabin and gained entrance

before the men began to shoot again. Two of the boys fired out of the window in return, while the other two found knot holes where they could look out and also fire through. The bullets were soon flying helter-skelter. Bob put his head up, and his cap was shot off of it.

"That'll give you a lesson," smiled Dick.

"That was a brand new cap, and now it's ruined," moaned Bob woefully.

Soon one of the outlaws threw up his hands and fell over on the ground. Another got off of his horse, and looked at him and then slowly shook his head.

"It's a pity we had to kill him," murmured Fred soberly, "but it was either him or us."

A few minutes later another outlaw staggered and fell to the ground. The leader and the man that was left then thinking that they had had enough rode off on their horses. The boys waited until they were far away and then went out to bury the dead men. They soon buried one, but saw that the other was breathing slightly. They brought him to their cabin and laid him on a bed. They ministered first aid to him and bandaged his wound. After they had fixed him up they

quietly left the room and then Sandy said, "I surely pity the poor fellow."

"So do we," was the answer from Bob, "but I wonder if the men will come back again."

"If they do they'll find us waiting for them," grinned Fred, tapping his gun.

"Listen," said Dick, "may be they will come back with their men. If they can't capture us they will starve us into submission."

"I'm going to see whether our food is there," said Fred, as he walked toward the cupboard. As he was half way there a hand was placed on his shoulder, and turning around he saw Bob.

"Don't go there," cautioned Bob quietly in a whisper.

Dick refrained from asking questions and walked back to the boys. In a few words Bob told them how he had seen the shadow of a man fall upon the window.

"We're being watched," said Dick at length.

"We are and I'm going to see who's here," said Bob determinedly, and he opened the door and crept softly out.

He was out but a few minutes when there came the sound of a scuffle and a solitary shot. The

boys rushed out in time to see Bob rise from the ground.

"Bob, what's the trouble?" they shouted.

"I saw a man looking in at the window, and I asked him what he wanted. He jumped at me and pulled out his gun and shot."

"Did he hit you?" asked Dick anxiously.

"Do you see any marks on me," asked Bob, "I guess he got the worst of it, I knocked the gun back and the bullet went into his hand."

"Who was it?" asked Sandy.

"He was our friend, the outlaw."

After this Dick and Sandy proposed to go in and see how their patient was progressing. They went in and saw the man staring wildly around him. As the boys entered the room he tried to get up but sank back with a groan of pain.

"How did I get here?" he asked in bewilderment.

"We brought you," laughed Dick good-naturedly.

The man kept silence and the boys went out again.

"Well, at any rate, we know that he won't die," said Bob.

After lunch they all went into the woods. When they came back they saw some one snooping around the cabin. They rushed at him and what was their surprise to see the man called "Bill."

"So you came back, did you?" asked Dick, "I'll make you wish you never had."

They brought him in and tied him after a long tussle.

"We'd better not take any chances with him," said Sandy, "he ought to be in jail."

"Yes, two of us can take him there," said Bob, "Sandy and myself will go."

They soon started and in a little while were out of sight.

In three hours they returned and said that "Bill" was safely lodged in jail. They went back into the woods but were near enough the cabin to see if anybody came there. In about five minutes they saw some one come around the side of the house.

"My, but I wish they would leave me alone," grumbled Sandy.

They sneaked out and threw the person that was snooping about down on his face. As they were going through the task of tying him, Dick

suddenly gave a cry and started to cut the knot. As the boys tried to make him stop he flung them aside. When the knots were untied the newcomer arose and smiled sheepishly. The boys stood paralyzed, for there facing them stood George Redney.

"Why, hello George," Fred managed to blurt out at last.

"Why, what's the matter," said George, "you stand there like a flock of dummies."

This brought the boys to action and they rushed forward eagerly to shake hands. They asked George why he had come, and he answered, "I mean to stay with you for awhile if you'll let me."

"We have only one more week but you can stay with us during that time," said Dick.

"You must be hungry, though?" answered Fred.

"I surely am," was the reply.

They put some food on the table and George soon announced that he was full. After this they sat down and George told them what he had done since they left him. As he told them they heard a thundering of horses' hoofs and Bob ran to the

door and peered anxiously out of it.

“Boys,” he called out excitedly, “here comes the outlaw and he has more than twenty men with him. They mean business this time.”

CHAPTER XI

A NARROW ESCAPE

"Well," said Sandy, after this startling exclamation, "if they are going to fight let them."

"George," said Bob, turning to their friend, "if they see you here they will kill you for leaving their camp."

"I'll stick with you," was the determined answer.

The boys were glad to see that the yellow streak that was in him before had entirely vanished.

"Well we may as well face it," said Dick, grimly, going to the door.

The horsemen stopped quite a way from the cabin, not caring to take chances with the boys. As Dick and his chums appeared the outlaw captain called to them and said, "You see I said we wanted you and we are going to have you."

"Not without a fight," came the cool answer.

"No! we'll see," grinned the outlaw, as he whispered something to his men.

The boys ran for the cabin, and just as they barred the door a fusilade of bullets flattened themselves against it. Each boy took a gun and as they went to the window gripped it tighter. Fred ventured to peek out but was met by a hail of bullets. The boys started to fire in return and the men withdrew.

"It's going to be easy," grinned George, "there's so many of them that some of them are bound to be hit."

The men advanced again, and one of them held up his hand.

"I wonder what he wants," mused Sandy.

As the boys appeared at the window the man said, "This is your last chance. Are you going to give up?"

"We haven't begun to fight yet," grimaced Dick.

The man went away and the boys dropped again. A moment later and a hail of bullets flattened on the window sill. Dick fired and one man dropped from his horse.

"Fire sure," he said, "there's no need in wasting bullets."

Bob fired three times and another man dropped. When the boys stopped to reload their guns four

men lay on the ground. After the second batch of ammunition was used, they counted seven men lying about and three more were badly wounded. The men withdrew and Bob said, "They are going away; I suppose they are afraid of our little guns," and he laughed merrily.

The men had drawn out of range, and now one of them came forward, and asked to bury their dead. The boys agreed and the men set about their grim task. When they were through, the whole group left.

"That's another bunch of cut-throats we are through with," laughed Bob, but could he have foretold the future he would not have spoken so lightly.

They went into the woods for awhile but soon came back again. The next day was uneventful, and the boys went to sleep with the belief that they would be left alone in the future, but this was not so.

"Now that we haven't got that sick man on our hands, we can do something," said Bob, for the man had been transferred over to the outlaws before.

They all awoke early next morning and set about

their usual tasks. After eating a meal, which consisted of ham and eggs and hot coffee, they stretched themselves out, and said they were just in the mood of adventures and these they were going to have. George went out to cut wood, but in five minutes came running back again, excitedly beaming from his face.

"What's the matter?" asked the boys, gathering around him.

"As I am cutting wood," began George, "I heard voices."

"What," gasped Bob, "I thought we were going to be left alone for a little while."

"I stopped to listen," said George, taking no heed of the interruption, "and I heard one of them say 'are you sure it's going to be safe?' 'Sure,' replied the other, 'they won't suspect.' 'I don't like this job,' went on the first voice, 'it's too ticklish.' 'Yes, but the kids will never know. Everything is fixed up against the cabin and all we have to do is to light it and pooh! the kids will go sky-high.' 'I'll teach them to kill my men,' a third voice now said, 'I'll hold them for ransom if I die trying it.' They walked away then, and that's all I know."

"The wretches," gasped Sandy, "they meant to blow us sky high."

"We won't give them a chance to," gritted Dick. They went out and by a careful search discovered a pile of shavings drenched with oil.

"So this is the noise I heard," said Fred, looking at the shavings, as though he expected them to get up and run away.

"Why, what do you mean by that?" asked Dick.

"Two nights ago," began Fred, "I woke early in the morning and heard a scraping sound over here. I never thought anything about it then, but this must have been what the wretches were doing."

They went to the cabin again, resolved to keep a guard after that. The day passed without further adventures, and the boys thought the men had left, so they did not have a guard that night. At about four o'clock in the morning they awoke and heard some one prowling about outside. Springing out of bed they ran to the door, and threw it open. As they opened it some one rushed into the woods.

"He must have been disappointed," smiled Fred to his chums.

They closed the door once more, and quickly dressed. They ran outside, and hunted around on the ground to see if they could find the footprints of a man. After a short search they once more turned toward the cabin, and as they entered Fred shook his fist toward the woods, and as he did so a loud guffaw broke from a clump of trees, and then there came a scrambling in the brush.

"After them boys," called Fred, "we might be able to capture the rascals."

The boys needed no second bidding, but were off like a shot. They could hear the men running and got on their trail. They kept it for a way and then lost it. After a short search George pointed to the ground, where they could see the footprints of a man.

"Come on," yelled George, and they once more started in hot pursuit. After a little while they lost the trail again, and were unable to find it. After a search of a good half hour the boys started to go back to the cabin again.

As they walked along the peaceful quiet was broken by a sharp cry, "Help! Help!" and it ended with a groan!

CHAPTER XII

OUTWITTING A ROBBER

As that cry broke out over the still night, the boys stopped short in their tracks and gazed at each other in consternation.

“Some one want’s help, and we’re going to give it to them,” said Bob, “the cry came from over that way.”

The five boys all darted the way indicated by Bob and were soon hurrying along. After a walk of nearly two minutes they came upon a cabin. They crept up and looked into the window. What they saw made them fairly gasp for breath. For there on his knees was an old man, and over him a younger man was bending grasping him by the hair.

“Tell me where the money is, or I’ll kill you,” threatened the young man.

“I haven’t any money, I told you,” cried the old man, in trembling tones.

“We can’t see that old man tortured,” said

Dick angrily, "I'm going to stop it right now."

They all advanced to the door which by good luck was open. They stepped into the room, but the young man did not notice them until he was hurled half way across the room.

"Get out of here, boy," cautioned the man, "or I might have to hurt you.

"You'll get out of here before I do," said Dick, without flinching.

"Yes," snarled the man, "we'll see about that," and he advanced three steps, but had he intended to frighten Dick he was mistaken, and on seeing the fiery flash in Dick's eyes the man shrank back.

"Don't let him do anything to me," implored the old man, in trembling tones.

"He won't do anything while we are here," said Dick, with a grim smile.

"I won't, eh," sneered the man, "I'll see," and he raised his fist threateningly. But Dick advanced and grabbing the man's wrist soon had him howling for mercy. Bob now advanced and together the two boys managed to tie the young man.

"What was he doing to you?" Bob asked the old man.

"He wanted my money," replied the old man, "although I put it in the bank yesterday. I told him so but he wouldn't believe me."

Bob went back to the young man and asked him, "What have you got to say for yourself?"

"Nothing," came back the surly reply, "but what are you going to do with me?"

"Put you in jail, of course, where you belong," said Bob, and then the man, as he said later, for the first time in his life burst out weeping.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Bob kind of surprised.

"I've never been in jail before," said the man, "I wish I had never turned bad," and burst out crying again.

After a little while he inquired, "Won't you leave me go this time? I'll promise to turn over a good leaf."

Bob turned to the old man and he nodded.

"If you promise to turn over a good leaf we'll leave you go," said Bob.

"I surely will," was the hearty exclamation, "God bless you, boy."

They untied the man's bonds and he rose. He went towards the door, and then the old man

pushed an envelope into his hand.

"Here," he said, "this may help you."

The young man went to the door and then waved his hand as a good-by to the little group, and he then dashed into the woods.

"I hope that he turns over a good leaf," said Bob, thoughtfully.

He was cut short by the old man, who said, "Well my boys you came just in time and I want to reward you."

"We never saved you for a reward," was the answer.

"I'm sure of that," said the old man, "but take it."

After the man was convinced that they would take no money, Bob called his chums, and they all left the cabin.

"Well, we got there just in time," laughed George, "and I'm glad we got to be of help."

They reached their hut and then Fred reminded them of breakfast.

"Why, yes, the excitement of the early morning made us forget all about that," said the other boys.

"Yes, and I'm as hungry as a bear," said

Sandy, suddenly recalling an important fact.

Breakfast was soon fixed and they put it down at a great rate. After breakfast was over Dick said, "Boys, we have only four more days here, so let's make the best of them."

This was met by a groan, and George said, "I wish that I knew what good fellows you were before. I wouldn't have stuck around Sam for an instant."

"Oh, shut up about Sam," grinned Fred, "you are not with him now."

The boys played pranks on each other for a long time and then sat down to a good lunch. After lunch they went to the woods and stayed there for awhile.

The four days passed altogether too quickly for the boys, and when they had to go they were very sorry. They all started for town, and when they got there they all went up to Bob's home. As they went into the yard, Mr. Morris ran up and gave them all a hearty welcome. They went into the kitchen and were all given a motherly embrace by Bob's mother. While Mrs. Morris was fixing something for them to eat, Mr. Morris asked,

"Now, son, tell me about your adventures, for

I'm bound that you had some lively ones."

The boys told all their adventures, and Mr. Morris whistled softly. After they were through he asked, "Are you sure you aren't fooling me about those ransomers, or outlaws?"

"No that's just like it was," was the emphatic answer.

"Well, I'm going to have that place wiped out," replied Mr. Morris, grimly.

The boys were now called upon to eat, and this they did. George called the meal he finished one of the best he had ever eaten.

"You can't beat mother and her cooking," laughed Bob.

After breakfast the boys strolled around the farm, showing George the sights. The next day Sandy went home, and when he got on the train leaving, he left some sorrowful friends behind him. The next morning Bob asked George what he intended to do. "I don't know," was the answer, "I guess I'll go to the hotel here."

As George went out, Bob came up to his father and asked, "Dad, George never has had a real chance. Why don't you adopt him—we have plenty of room.

"If you want him here, I'll adopt him, my boy," came the kind answer.

When George came in again he could hardly believe the good fortune, but when he found it was really true, he turned to Bob and said, "I'm not going to say much, but you know how grateful I am."

"Don't talk about it," was the warm reply.

Nothing happened during the day, but that night Fred went out alone. As he was wondering what he should do, he saw a man coming down the street. Fred gazed at him, and then gave a start, for he had recognized Mr. Harding. But the man recognized him at almost the same instant. He turned around and started to run with Fred after him.

"If Dick or someone was only with me, we might be able to capture him, but I can't do anything alone," thought Fred, as he ran. He was soon reinforced, for as he turned another corner he saw a well dressed gentleman standing near a lamp-post. Running up to him, Fred tapped his shoulder, and now he was destined to a surprise, for the man was no other than the robber they had let go and who promised to turn over a good leaf.

“Help me catch him,” was all Fred could say, and he darted away again, with the man right on his heels. Mr. Harding ran down a narrow street and then ducked into a building. Fred and his companion passed by, and it was soon clear to them that they had lost him. They soon came back, and just as they started to go by the building where Mr. Harding had taken refuge, Fred gave his companion a violent shove backwards. It was lucky he did, for an instant later a great iron pot was smashed to pieces on the sidewalk, and had the young man not been thrown backwards it would have ground his brains into powder!

CHAPTER XIII

A DARING ESCAPE

When the man picked himself up again and saw what had happened they both started up the stairs. They heard a shuffling near the top and so hurried there. Just as they reached the top, a door slammed and they bolted for this. Throwing all their weight against the door it caved in.

But where was Mr. Harding—for the room was empty!

They ran to the window by which stood a tree, and could see him just reaching the ground.

"I wouldn't take a dare on this tree," shivered Fred. He touched a branch and it quivered and broke in half.

When they got to the ground they looked up and down the street but could see nothing, so they started back the way they came.

"You see that I made good," said the man.

"I should say you have," said Fred, "tell me about it."

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"There is nothing to it," replied the man modestly, "but when I came here I bought some new clothes and got a job at the factory. But I never told you my name—it's William Pierson."

"And mine's Fred Turner," replied Fred.

They soon came to where they had to part and Fred walked on alone. In an hour Fred arrived at Mr. Morris' house and went in.

"Where have you been, Fred?" asked Dick, anxiously.

Fred told his story and Dick observed, "So Mr. Harding is here in town. That means that Sam is here too."

"Yes, and it all means trouble," said Bob who had come up and heard the last of the talk.

They went to bed, and the next morning when they sat down to breakfast, Mr. Morris was not there.

"Where is father?" Bob asked.

"I don't know," Mrs. Morris replied, "he hasn't been here this morning. He wasn't in bed this morning either."

"Not in bed!" gasped all the boys.

"Good-by, boys, I'm going to dad's office," called out Bob, "he might be there."

"Bob! Bob! eat your breakfast first," called out Mrs. Morris.

Bob returned and in fifteen minutes all the boys were riding towards Mr. Morris' office, and when they got there they saw Mr. Freeman, the hired man, sitting down at his desk.

"Is dad here?" asked Bob anxiously.

"Why, no," said Mr. Freeman, "I'm waiting for him to come."

The boys all went out again and here they met an old seadog.

"Looking for your father?" he asked kindly.

"Yes, did you see him?" asked Bob.

"I saw him go into his office about an hour ago," was the startling reply.

"You did?" asked Bob incredulously.

"Yes, and there seems to be something mighty funny to me," replied the old sailor.

"Tell us about it," said the boys, breathlessly.

"Well, I reckon that I will," said the old salt, "I was sitting here, and I saw your father go up to his office. About five minutes later some tough looking men went up there, and all of a sudden there was a shot. I got up and ran over there, and I met those two men coming out. 'What's the

matter?" asked one of them. "I heard a shot up here," said I. "You must have been mistaken," said the other, "we just came down and we never heard anything." I came back over here then."

Bob asked, "Did they have anything with them?"

"They were carrying something wrapped up in canvas," was the answer.

"What was their description?"

This was told them and Bob turned to the boys and said, "I guess you know who it is now."

"Sam Harding's father," echoed the boys.

They thanked the old sailor, and then they walked off.

They rode back to their house, and Bob told his mother about it.

"I'm not afraid, for I know that you will find him," she said quietly. They went out again, and Bob asked, "Hadn't we better notify the police?"

"Yes, and I'm going to do it," replied Dick.

They went to the police station and told their story. After getting a promise that they would attend to it later, they went out into the street again.

"They most naturally would have gone out of the county," said George.

"Hadn't we better go back and ask the old sailor?" suggested Fred.

They went back and the old sailor showed them the way they had gone.

"Just as I thought," muttered George, "that's the way to the woods."

"What do you mean?" the boys asked.

"They must have brought him to their cabin. They meant to keep the secret away from me at first, but I found the cabin and they had to let me in," said George.

"That must have been it," said Bob, slowly.

They set off to the woods and soon reached it. They cut through it and after a long walk came upon the cabin. They cautiously approached, but on peeking in, were chagrined to find it empty.

"They never came here—that's a fact," said Fred.

"Yes, but there is some place in the woods," rejoined George.

"I wish that—" but the sentence was never finished, for Bob suddenly gave a yell and pointed to the ground.

They ran to him and there on the ground they could see some freshly made tracks.

"They came this way," said Bob, excitedly.

They followed the prints for a way, and soon they heard some voices. They went to the spot the voices came from and there they could see the two men sitting around a fire.

"I wonder where dad is," said Bob, "I wonder if he is in that tent?"

"I'm going to see," answered George, slowly.

"How can you get there?" they asked.

He cut away from them, and soon was at the very background of the tent. He sneaked up and the boys breathed an inward prayer.

"That's risky business," remarked Bob.

At last George succeeded in making the tent without being caught. He raised the flap and saw Mr. Morris lying on the ground in the interior. He slowly made his way back to the boys and told them that he was there.

"One of us had better stay here, while the others go for the police," whispered Fred.

George was voted to stay, and the other boys went to town.

As half an hour passed, and the boys did not

come back, George started to get nervous. He heard the men talking and one of them said, "I'm going to have a smoke now, Ted, want to join me in one?"

"No," growled Ted, "I have enough trouble keeping those pesky kids away."

George was kneeling down in the brush, just peering over, when there came a quick step behind him, something hit his head and then came darkness!

CHAPTER XIV

A MYSTERIOUS LETTER

Returning to the boys who went back to town. They reached it in an hour, and went to the police station. After telling their story the officers said they would have to wait a little while. They waited for half an hour and then two policemen came up to them and the group started back to where they had left George. After an hour's walk they came upon the spot where they had left him, but there was no sign of George or the camp.

They searched all around, and then one of the policemen came upon the fire, which was just smouldering.

"Some one's been here, that's certain," he said, "and it wasn't very long ago, either."

After getting on the men's tracks, the boys followed them for quite a distance. Soon however they came upon a dry place, and here they lost the trail. They searched around for awhile, but they still could not find the men's tracks. After a half

hour search they turned back once more. When they had scarcely gone ten feet Bob stopped and said, "I'm not going back to town without George and father."

"Neither will we then," said Fred and Dick, stepping up to Bob's side.

"Oh, come on," grumbled the policemen, "you can't find them. We are going back to town."

"Go on," grimly said Fred, "we're not."

The men argued a little longer and then plunged into the woods and were soon lost to sight.

"I'm glad that they are gone," smiled Bob, "they're cowards."

"They are cowards," snorted Dick, angrily.

"Yes, but if we intend to find your father, we had better hurry," broke in Fred just then.

They searched awhile longer, and suddenly Fred gave a cry,

"They fooled us," he yelled, "they went back again instead of going forward."

The other two boys stood and gaped at him.

"Why, you must be right," blurted out Bob at length.

They retraced their steps, and a little later saw the men's tracks leading back. They gave a cry

of exultation and hurried along at a faster pace.

After a few minutes Dick said, "I'll bet that they went back to the cabin." Bob nodded, and they hurried on once more.

It is now time to turn back to George.

* * * * *

When George came back to himself he saw the leering face of Sam bending over him.

"So you will try to spy on us," he hissed.

George attempted to rise, and for the first time he noticed that he was tied. Just then Mr. Harding came to the tent and bending over George, cut the ropes that bound him. George rose and at first swayed dizzily, but in a minute got back his strength.

"If you don't make any fuss, we'll not hurt you, but on your first attempt to escape we are going to do it," Harding said.

"I guess that I'll not trying anything," coolly replied George.

After Mr. Harding had left Sam said with a sneer, "Don't you wish you had stayed with us?"

"No," thundered out George, "I'm sorry I stayed with you as long as I did."

Sam started to make a remark, but on seeing

George's fiery eyes, he thought better of it and turned away.

In a few minutes Mr. Harding came back in and motioned for George to come outside. He followed and then noticed that the men were making preparations for moving. The tent was taken down and stored away, and then all the group started. Two men were carrying Mr. Morris who was now beginning to show signs of consciousness. They walked for a way, and then Sam asked, "Hadn't we better go back on our tracks, it might fool anybody who might be following us."

"That's about the only sensible thing you ever said," gritted out George bitterly.

Mr. Morris had opened his eyes now and was staring around wildly. As his eye fell on Sam he seemed to remember everything. The two men put him down on his feet, and at first he staggered weakly. In a few minutes however he had regained strength enough to walk. He went over to George and the trip was then resumed. Mr. Morris turned on George and said bitterly, "I know why you always went with my son now, but thank goodness he's out of your reach."

"I'm not with them, I have been captured my-

self," replied George, "the other boys have gone back to town to get constables to help them."

After Mr. Morris was assured of this he begged George's pardon. After a walk of five more minutes, they suddenly came upon the men's cabin. Before entering the men tied George and Mr. Morris and threw them both into a corner. They stayed in this position for half an hour or more and then suddenly George glanced toward the window. His heart leapt into his mouth, for he could see the features of Bob outlined against the window pane. The men were playing cards while Sam watched them, and the boys were not seen.

The three boys outside were now talking.

"They are in there sure enough," called Bob, softly, as he dropped from the window.

"But how can we get them," woefully asked Dick, "we can't go in there and just say that we want them."

"I'll fix that," grinned Fred, displaying two pistols.

"Where in the world did you get them?" asked Bob in amazement.

"While those two policemen were arguing with

us, and trying to get us to go back to town, you noticed that I got near up to them, didn't you?"

"Yes," agreed the two boys.

"Well, while I was near them I got their two guns out of their holsters."

"I could kiss you for that," smiled Dick, and he and Bob took hold of the guns and slowly advanced to the cabin.

They stepped into the room, and as their shadows darkened the doorway the men sprang up. They reached for their guns, but before they could touch them a bullet sang over their heads.

"That's just a warning," grunted Bob, "leave those guns alone."

Fred advanced and got the guns and thus completely disarmed the men.

After this Fred advanced to George and Mr. Morris and cut the ropes that bound them. All took a gun and leveled them at the men's heads.

"Come along here," ordered Mr. Morris sternly.

The men cursed under their breath but advanced slowly. With the men in front of them the whole group started towards the town. In a little while they all heard a body fall behind them.

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The eyes of all were distracted for a moment, and the men and Sam seizing the opportunity sprung into the woods. Dick turned just in time to see them all disappearing into the woods. He fired at them and a groan of pain came from Sam.

"I guess Sam won't forget me in a hurry," Dick said grimly.

He turned back and saw Bob just rising from the ground.

"Let the men go," said Mr. Morris, and then turning to Bob he asked, "Anything the matter?"

"I've sprained my ankle," said Bob weakly.

They picked him up and carried him into town. After a long time they reached Mr. Morris' home, and Mrs. Morris came running out.

She fell around her husband's neck, and then turned all her attention to Bob. He was carried in and laid on the couch. Mrs. Morris then came back and said, "Dick, here's a letter that came for you about three minutes ago—it was slipped under the door."

They crowded around him while he tore it open. He read it and then turned to them and smiled.

"Read it to us," said Mr. Morris, "don't keep us in suspense any longer."

Dick read the letter, which said:

"Next time it won't be so easy to get away. Next time we get you it means death. We'll get you Dick for shooting Sam."

There was no signature, but they did not have to be told who it was from.

"We'd better not be captured again," laughed George, as he threw the note into the fire.

The afternoon passed uneventfully, and the boys went to sleep that night with nothing on their minds. About midnight they were awakened by hearing some one moving about down stairs. They got out of bed but Mr. Morris called up to them, "Don't worry, it's only me."

They went back to bed and were just dozing off again when they heard a scuffle down stairs, and then a sharp shot rang out over the still air!

CHAPTER XV

THE RIDDLE OF THE BOATHOUSE

The boys were out of bed in a flash and were running downstairs. Here they met Mrs. Morris who was wringing her hands and crying.

"I dread to go in there," she shivered.

The boys went to the door of Mr. Morris' room and threw it open. It was empty!

They went to the room that Mr. Morris used for his home office and threw that open. They turned on the light, and there lying on the floor in a pool of blood was Mr. Morris. Mrs. Morris ran to the telephone and soon Dr. Mathews, the doctor, entered the room. He bent over the wounded man, and looked him over. He was put in bed and the boys anxiously awaited the doctor's answer as to whether Mr. Morris would live or not. After a restless half hour of waiting, the doctor came softly down stairs, followed by Mrs. Morris. They rushed to the doctor and breathlessly asked, "Will he get well,"

"I can't say as to that," was the doctor's verdict, "a fraction of an inch more and he would have died outright. He may die in a short while, or he may linger for a few months, but there may be a chance that he will get well, but he must have quiet."

"We'll see that he gets it," murmured the boys.

After the doctor was gone the boys grabbed what little sleep was left before morning. The next morning they moved around quietly for fear of making any noise. The next three days passed quickly and the doctor's face was very grave. On the fourth day, however, while they were waiting for the doctor to come down they saw him coming, while behind him came Mrs. Morris wreathed in smiles.

The boys went over to the doctor and he said, "Your father would like to see you all."

They all ran upstairs and burst into the room. Mr. Morris turned over and smiled at them.

"Boys, I've something important to tell you," he said. The boys waited, and Mr. Morris went on: "I presume you know that my desk was rifled of my papers. One of them was very important. It was an invention that I had fixed.

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It means my fortune if I can only get it back."

"We'll get it for you," said Bob.

The doctor came in then, and the boys had to leave.

They went outside in a very happy but thoughtful frame of mind. There was a new boathouse being built beside the old one. They went into the old boathouse, and here they smelled liquor.

"Phew," said Fred, in disgust, "somebody has been making this place a hangout."

"I should say they have," returned Dick; "look here," and he pointed to a pile of cigar stubs. They strolled out again and walked around town. When they returned to the farm they sat down to an appetizing feast. After lunch Bob asked, "I wonder who could have taken dad's paper?"

"I'd like to get hold of him," gritted Fred, clenching his fists.

That night after dinner the boys went out once more to town. While strolling along near the old boathouse they suddenly heard a splash of oars and an angry voice talking. "Why don't you be more careful with those oars?" it said.

"Boys," said Bob, turning a startled face toward his chums, "I'm going to investigate this

thing. It looks queer to me."

They crept up and could see some men getting out of their boat. They softly went up to the old boathouse. By looking in at a window they could see all the men grouped around a lantern.

"Why, there's a boy," whispered Dick.

Just then the boy turned for an instant, and our friends recognized the features of Sam Harding.

They now turned their attention to what the men were saying. One said, "How much will you sell it to us for?"

"Ten thousand dollars," said a man whom the boys knew was Mr. Harding.

"Ten thousand dollars! You must be crazy!" angrily cried another of the three strangers; "we won't pay it."

"Just look at that," said Mr. Harding, holding the paper up in front of him.

"That's father's paper," angrily cried Bob.

"Listen, now," said Dick, holding up his hand.

"We'll give you \$2,000 for it," said the first speaker.

"No."

"Five thousand dollars?"

"No."

“Not a bit more than \$8,000,” sneered the man, angrily.

After a great deal of haggling Sam’s father accepted the offer of \$8,000.

“The villians,” muttered Bob.

The men then brought some whiskey and cigars, and they sat down again and smoked and drank.

The boys waited for awhile, expecting to hear more information. But as they were about to part, one of the strangers said, “Meet here tomorrow and we’ll fix up the deal.”

The boys then started for home and after a long walk reached it. They all sat down and once more waited for the doctor to come down. When he did he told them to go up and see Mr. Morris again. They entered the sick man’s room and he turned to them and asked weakly, “Have you found any trace of the papers yet?” Dick was about to launch into full details when a warning glance from Bob stopped him.

“We have a slight trace of them,” answered Bob. They talked a little longer and then the boys went out. That night they once more stole down to the boathouse. After waiting for a while they could hear the whole group coming. They went

into the boathouse and they started to talk once more.

"Have you got the money?" asked Mr. Harding. This was passed over and Mr. Harding grunted.

They talked awhile longer in low tones and then they left.

The boys stole in and searched around. Hardly had they been in two minutes when the door was slammed shut. They rushed to the back door, only to find that locked also. As they stared at each other a peculiar smell filled the air. It was the smell of smoke. As they looked, the boathouse burst into flames before their eyes!

"We must find a way out of this," said George when they had somewhat regained their composure.

Dick blurted out, "This is our only way, and it is dangerous, but I'm going to do it." He showed them a hole near the top of the boathouse, and only persons with good eyes could see it. They took all the old boxes they could find and piled them one above the other. Dick climbed on top of these, but still could not touch the hole.

All of a sudden Bob gave a cry and told his

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scheme to the other boys. He stood under the hole while George stood on his shoulder, then Fred stepped on George's shoulders and Dick climbed on Fred's shoulders. Only boys with good training could do this, but our friends were good at all gymnastics and this helped them.

Dick was able to grasp at the edge of the hole and pulled himself up. A tramping on the roof told them that he had made it. The air was getting hot now and the fire was getting worse. They were soon gasping for breath.

All of a sudden the door sprung open and a gust of fresh air ran into the boathouse. The boys staggered out and fell on the ground outside. The fire had been seen by the inhabitants of the town, and soon the fire engines came up. A stream of water was soon played into the building. The sheriff came, and when he saw the boys gasping for breath he asked sternly:

"Do you know who it was set this boathouse on fire?"

"Sure," said Dick, and he told them who it was.

"You don't expect me to believe that, do you?" asked the sheriff with a laugh.

"I sure do," answered Dick, growing angry.

"Don't lie, you might as well say you did it and be through."

Just then a cry came from the crowd, and looking toward the building they saw that the fire was extinguished.

"Come in here with me," commanded the sheriff.

Dick muttered something under his breath, but nevertheless followed the sheriff. When they got in the sheriff looked all around.

"Ah, just as I thought," he said in a guttural voice, and held up to view some cigar and cigarette stubs.

"Smoking, eh?" he asked with a sneer; "you had better come with me."

Dick started to protest, but was silenced by the sheriff. The boys followed him to his office, and here the sheriff turned on them and said, "How did that fire start?"

Bob told the same tale as Dick had, and then the sheriff asked, "Locked in, eh? Well, I'll have to see about this."

After an investigation things were soon fixed with the sheriff and they started for home. Next morning they awoke late, went outside, and did

not have a chance to see their father. They went out into the country, and as they were walking along suddenly Bob gave a cry and pointed to an approaching buggy.

"There's one of the men who bought that document. I'm going to get him."

As the buggy started to pass them, Bob took a leap and landed on the seat beside the man.

"Stop this buggy," he ordered, sternly.

The buggy was stopped, and Bob asked, "Why did you lock that door on us last night?"

"I—don't hit," whimpered the man, cowering.

"I'm not going to hit you," said Bob scornfully, "but I want my father's document."

"I haven't got it," said the man boldly.

"Don't lie—we saw the whole transaction."

"Then catch me," yelled the man, and getting Bob off his guard he gave him a push that sent him headlong into the road. At the same instant he whipped up his horse and dashed off at a great rate of speed. The other three boys ran after him, but the buggy soon left them way behind. They went to town, and as they walked along they suddenly met the man whom they had stopped from robbing the old fellow in the cabin.

They talked for awhile, then of a sudden Bob asked, "Did you see a buggy dash through here about noon?"

"Why, yes," replied the young man; "I'll tell you about it. I saw it dash through here and I followed it. It went down to the depot and the man driving it bought a ticket to New York."

The boys stopped and gazed at each other with a surprise that was hard to conceal.

CHAPTER XVI

OFF FOR NEW YORK

When the man saw the boys look at each other, he stopped short and asked, "Why, is anything the matter?"

"I should think there is," said Bob, and he told the man all about it.

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked.

"I guess I'll go to New York," was the reply.

"If you go to New York I'll go too," broke in Dick.

"I don't care who goes," said Bob, with a wry smile.

"If you don't care who goes, I'll go too," chimed in the young man.

"You?" asked Bob in surprise; "you have to work, don't you?"

"Oh, I'm on my vacation; I get two weeks," he added proudly.

"Then I'll be glad to have you," replied Bob warmly.

It was soon decided that the whole group should go. They went back to Bob's house and told his mother where they were going.

It was then decided they should go on the next day. The following morning the boys rose early and went in to see their father. They told him where they were going and he urged them to go right away. The boys came downstairs and each had a small bundle of clothes done up. They met Mr. Pierson outside and they started for the depot. Three hours later found them in New York. Mr. Pierson showed them around, for he had been in New York before. They first found a cheap hotel, and then they went out onto the street. They were walking around when Bob uttered a sharp cry.

"There's that man," Bob whispered, pointing across the street.

They started after him but he saw them as quickly, and started away in a run. After going a little way they lost him completely.

"I wish New York wasn't so big," said George, looking about him.

Nothing more happened, but that night Fred and Dick went out alone. Scarcely had they got-

ten into the street when they saw the man they were in search of.

"Let's follow him," suggested Dick. They followed him for a way and soon he turned into a dirty, narrow street. They tracked him down here, and soon they saw him turn into a gloomy building. When they came up to it, they saw that it was a cheap restaurant. They looked in and soon the man was joined by two others.

"All accounted for," laughed Dick softly.

Just then they saw the other two men rise and go out the back way. They were so busy noting the man that was left that they did not hear steps in back of them until one of the men cried out:

"What do you mean by watching us?"

The two boys turned to see the two men glaring down at them.

"I want that document," said Dick sternly.

"What document?" returned the men; "we haven't any document."

"I want my uncle's document," said Dick once more, for Mr. Morris had told him to call him uncle.

"You're a maniac," said the men, "and you ought to be in the asylum."

"I want that paper, and want it quick," was the determined reply from Dick.

"Well, you won't get it," yelled the men, and jumping toward the two boys soon had them captured. The man that they had been trailing came out now and helped in their capture. They were soon tied, and going farther down the street they came upon a dark and dreary building. They went in this and went up to the top floor. They entered a room, and the men threw them into a corner.

"Open your mouths," they ordered.

The boys refused at first, but the men held their noses until they were compelled to open their mouths for breath. The gag was stuck in and the boys could not talk at all. They took a match and thrust it into a pile of paper.

"Good-by!" they called mockingly; "we hope you have a good time." The paper was now blazing brightly and the men left.

The boys tried their utmost to break the rope that bound them. Joy! One of Fred's strands broke. Only one single strand, but it gave him hope. He strained all his muscles and suddenly another strand broke. Then another one. Soon Fred was at liberty. He rushed to the paper and

stamped the blaze out just in time. He then went over to Dick and untied him.

"That was a narrow escape, and I owe my life to you," said Dick earnestly, and there was a tremor in his voice.

"You must be getting sick," grinned Fred; "let me feel your pulse."

Dick laughed and the two boys went down to the street.

"They're gone," said Dick, "so we might as well go back to the hotel."

As they were passing the restaurant they suddenly saw Mr. Pierson ahead of them. They ran up to him and Mr. Pierson asked, "Where have you been?"

They told him, and he replied, "Wait till I get at those two men. I won't do anything to them!" and he showed them his muscles. They stuck out like bands of iron. While they were going back to the hotel Mr. Pierson said, "I thought of having the entire police force out looking for you."

"No fear of your ever doing that," laughed the two boys; "you know how we can take care of ourselves."

"I ought to," grinned the young man.

They soon arrived at the hotel and saw the other two boys waiting for them.

"So the prodigals have returned. Where were you?" asked Bob.

The story was soon told, and Bob said, "I'm going to keep you two in my sight from now on."

They soon went to bed and woke early next morning.

"Well, here's another day's suspense," said Mr. Pierson, with a yawn.

"Yes, and another day of eating," rejoined Bob with a laugh, as the breakfast bell rang. They sat down to a table and all ate readily. After breakfast was over they all went outside.

"This is fine," said Bob, as he stretched out on a bench in a park. They shortly went down to the ocean, and Bob said that it was the first time he had ever seen it. "Then you've missed something," said Mr. Pierson; "I've been a sailor, sailing over these seas too."

"Is that where you developed your muscles," asked Bob in admiration.

After gazing at the ocean for awhile they strolled around the wharves.

"This is dandy to have this sea-breeze," said

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Bob, inhaling the sweet air. They walked around for awhile and then started to go back to their hotel.

As they were returning they suddenly heard a piercing scream, and looking back they saw a runaway horse coming down the street at full speed, and in the carriage that the horse was pulling sat a fair girl of about fourteen!

CHAPTER XVII

A DARING RESCUE

The boys stared at it, and then they noticed that Dick was not with them. Looking into the street they saw Dick right in the path of the advancing horse that rushed forward like a whirlwind. His boy chums stared at him with pale faces, as the horse came onward.

All of a sudden, just as the horse was passing, Dick gave a leap and grasped the horse's bridle. The horse slowed down as the double weight got stronger, but in an instant he was away again. He shook his head and Dick swung back and forth a foot away from the horse's hoofs. The boy chums were running behind, but were unable to catch the horse.

After a long time of swinging to the bridle, Dick gave a hard jerk, bringing the horse to his knees. The girl was pitched into the street, and some men who were standing around rushed to her. Dick succeeded in quieting the horse and the animal

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stood there trembling all over with cold sweat rolling down its sides.

Just then an automobile came up and an elderly man jumped out of it.

"Where's my daughter?" he asked anxiously.

"She is in my shop," said a fat lady, coming across to them.

The man rushed over to the lady's shop. Just then a doctor came up, followed by a curious crowd of men and boys. He went into the shop, but came out quickly.

Dick went up to him and asked, "Is she hurt much?"

"No," was the reply; "she was only stunned."

Dick went into the crowd, and at the back joined his chums. They all started to go to the hotel, but had not gone far when a man rushed up to them.

"They want you back there," he said.

The boys went back and here they met the girl's father.

"Which one of you saved my girl?" he asked kindly.

Dick grinned, and would not have gone up if his chums had not pushed him forward. As he

came up the man asked, "Are you the one who saved my little girl?"

"Well, 'er," stammered Dick, "I was the one who stopped the horse."

"I want to reward you," said the man with a smile; "take this," and he held out a roll of bills to the astonished Dick.

"No, sir, I don't want your money," said Dick, drawing back.

The man tried to push the bills into Dick's hands, but could not do it.

"Well then if you are so obstinate," cried the man, "take my card, and if you are ever in trouble call on me."

Just then the girl rushed up and kissed Dick. Then leaving him fiery red she merrily skipped over to her father. The man turned away with a smile and went over to his automobile. The crowd soon dwindled away and left Dick staring wildly at the disappearing automobile.

"Who was that man?" asked Bob, coming forward.

Dick looked at the card, which read, "Mr. Harold J. Brown, Dealer in Stocks and Bonds, Wall Street, New York, N. Y."

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As they went Fred said, "This ought to be good for the newspapers. 'Dick Coleman Rescues Fair Damsel—Falls in Love with Her, and is Kissed.' "

Dick clenched his fist and said angrily, "If you weren't my chum I would lick you."

They walked on to the hotel and after a long walk reached it.

"This is the life for me," said George, throwing himself down on the sofa.

They soon went down to lunch, and after they were done went outside. After going a little way Dick remembered something that he had left in the hotel and hurried back for it. He got it, and as he was coming downstairs again he saw the man that they were after go into a room underneath theirs.

"So this is where they live," he mused; "I'm glad they don't know that we are right above them."

When he got back to his chums he told them what he had seen.

"Then we ought to be able to get the document soon," said Bob joyfully.

They walked around all the afternoon and then went back to the hotel. As they sat down to din-

ner they looked all around to see if they could see the man they were after, but he was no place in sight

"I see that he's afraid to come down and eat," said Bob dryly.

After dinner they went up to their room and read. At nine o'clock, just as they were going to bed, Bob gave a cry and pointed to a hole in the floor.

"We can see what those men are doing," he said.

They took turns in looking through and each could see the men looking at a paper.

Soon the men got up and put the paper under the clock and then the light was turned out.

"We know where it is at any rate," laughed Bob delightedly.

The boys soon fell asleep and woke late in the morning. After eating a cold breakfast they went out into the street. They walked around for a time, and then went into a restaurant to eat.

The other boys went back to the hotel, but Dick stayed out longer. Having nothing to do he suddenly remembered the card he had in his pocket. He got on a street car and after being directed

several times he reached Wall Street. He was amazed at the bustle of the people as they walked down the street, and he followed them.

Soon he saw a large building in front of him. The sign on it read, "Mr. Brown, Dealer in Stocks and Bonds."

"This must be him," said Dick, as he walked upstairs. He soon came to a room which he saw to be Mr. Brown's. He walked in and here an office boy stopped him.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I want to see Mr. Brown," was the answer.

Just then Mr. Brown came in, and on seeing Dick shook hands heartily with him.

They talked for awhile, and then Mr. Brown said, "I hope that you will come to see me soon—Alice is wild to see you."

Dick got to the hotel just in time to eat dinner. As he and Bob went to their room he saw the door of the room that the men occupied was open. They softly went in and looked under the clock for the document, but it was not there!

* * * * *

After breakfast the next morning they went out and walked around. Dick went by himself, as he

was going to see Mr. Brown's daughter, Alice. He reached the house after a great deal of difficulty, and when he first saw it he stood like one in a trance. He had seen many splendid mansions before, but none as pretty as this. He soon got over his spell and walked up to the door. He rang the bell and the door was swung open by Alice herself.

"I saw you coming," she said, "so I rushed down and opened the door." And then she continued, "Why don't you come in?" for Dick was halting at the threshold.

Dick went into the mansion scared of everything he saw, for it was the first time he had ever been in a house as beautiful as this one. They sat down in a room that Dick thought was about the prettiest in New York.

Alice noticed his gaze and asked sweetly, "Wouldn't you like to see the house?"

"I don't care if I do," was the rather hesitating reply. She showed him the house and Dick declared that each room was better than the former one.

All of a sudden Dick glanced at the clock and said, "Twelve o'clock; I must be going."

“Won’t you eat here today?” asked Miss Alice.

Dick consented and soon a lunch fit for a king was brought in. Dick blinked at it for a moment and then at Miss Alice.

“Pitch right into it,” laughed that young lady.

Dick needed no second urging but went for it. After all had been satisfied, the boy and girl sat down again. They strolled into the park and went back to the mansion. The time flew past and at four o’clock Dick said he must be going.

Alice expressed her wish for him to come back again, and then Dick left. He strolled along whistling and then got a car and rode down to the wharves. It was growing dark quicker than he expected and darkness soon fell on him.

“I may as well walk home,” he mused; “it isn’t so far.”

He strolled along whistling and soon he got out of the wharves. He walked around then glanced at his watch.

“Why, it’s only five o’clock—it got dark soon; there must be going to be a storm.”

He met a sailor and asked him whether there was going to be a storm or not. “No,” grinned that individual; “what makes you think so?”

"It's so dark," replied Dick, and walked on.

Suddenly he went into a dark and cramped street, and he walked along this. As he was half way through however he saw a light in a basement. He started to pass it when he heard a low groan which came from someone in agony!

CHAPTER XVIII

AN INTERESTING ADVENTURE

Let us return to the boys that Dick had left.

"Well, boys," asked Mr. Pierson, "what are we going to do today?"

"I'll put all that in your hands," said Bob.

"Then the first thing we'll do is to go to Central Park," answered the young man.

They started out and after a long walk they reached Central Park. They strolled around looking at things and Mr. Pierson asked, "Isn't that your enemy over there?" The boys looked and there they saw Sam Harding and three other men. They came up near, and then saw them joined by another man. Their attention was then attracted by a well-dressed man coming down the walk. One of the men jostled against him and nearly knocked him down.

"Oh, excuse me," he said.

"Oh, it's nothing," said the man, with a smile. The boys were near now, and they saw another

of Sam's group go nearer and steal the well-dressed man's watch.

"Here's a job for us, boys," said Mr. Pierson, advancing. He came up near, and with a powerful sweep of his hand knocked both of the men flat. He jumped on the man who had the watch and started to hammer him.

"Why, what is the matter here?" asked the well-dressed man in a surprised tone.

"If you'll look for your watch," said Bob, "you'll see what is the matter."

The man hastily looked for his watch and when he could not find it the whole situation came to him.

"You take care of this man and we'll go after the others," called Mr. Pierson, as they all dashed off.

"They went down this way," called Fred, indicating a street.

They rushed down it and here they could see the robbers running before them.

They ran on and gained inch by inch.

"Hurrah!" yelled out George; "at this rate we will soon get them."

They soon came upon a crowded thoroughfare,

when they saw Sam and his gang get in a taxi and drive off. They hailed another taxi and they once more got on the trail. Sam's auto had a substantial lead at first, but now Bob's taxi was crawling up.

"They're headed towards Hudson River," said Mr. Pierson, after riding for twenty minutes; "this is the road towards it."

They put on extra speed and gained faster. Mr. Pierson's statement was soon discovered to be true, for before them they could see a narrow streak of glimmering water, and as they got nearer they could see the river. Sam's auto reached there a few minutes before Bob's, and they jumped into a row boat and rowed off.

The boys saw another boat a little way up the river, and they jumped into this. As they got out into the middle of the river they saw a man shaking his fist at them from the shore.

"He must be the owner of the boat, but we can't help it now," said Mr. Pierson.

Sam's boat gained on them. Mr. Pierson and Bob, who were rowing, also increased their strokes. They slowly crawled up and were soon in talking distance of the other row boat.

“Stop that boat,” called George.

The men looked around and on seeing the row boat so near they displayed a pistol.

“Get back there,” shouted one, “or we’ll shoot!”

The boys were filled with consternation at the appearance of the pistol and stopped rowing for an instant. But that was long enough for the men to get ahead more.

“I don’t think it’s loaded,” said Bob; “come on and row.”

They once more seized their oars and swiftly shot down the river. As they were once more getting near the other row boat a bullet struck the water ahead of them, sending up a spray.

“Don’t stop rowing,” called Bob to Mr. Pier-son; “the rest of you get down into the boat.”

The boys fell down into the bottom of the boat which once more shot forward. Another bullet came and struck Bob in the shoulder. He gave a cry of pain and nearly let his oar drop into the water. Fred sprang into Bob’s place, while Bob fell down into the boat. They had been rowing for an hour now, but the boat with Sam’s gang was still far ahead.

"This must be Springville," said Mr. Pierson; "we must catch them before they get there."

They increased their strokes wonderfully, but the other men on seeing the town also increased their strokes and managed to keep their lead. They reached Springville a good twenty-five rods before the other boat. They sprang upon the shore and darted away. As soon as Bob's craft touched shore they leaped off and started after the men. They followed them for a way and then saw them dart into a building. They went in after them but they were no place in sight. After a close search they came upon a door and flung this open. There were some men in the yard and they asked them where the men were.

"They went down that way," replied one of the men, pointing toward the river.

"They went back to the boat," said George; "we can catch them."

They hurried on and soon came to the river, but the men were nowhere in sight.

"Here's their boat, too," said Bob, pointing to the craft.

"That man lied to us," said Mr. Pierson grimly. "I'm going back and have a reckoning with him."

They went back, but when they came to the yard the man who lied to them was no place in sight.

“Did you see where those men went who came out of this door a little while ago?” they asked of another man.

“Yes, they went down that way,” was the answer, and the man pointed to Springville. They walked toward the town and Bob said, “I’d like to get a chance at that man that told us they went down toward the river.”

They came to the town and looked around in the hope of finding the men. After being assured of the fact that they could not, they went into a restaurant to eat their dinner. After eating they went down to the rowboat and met with a great surprise. There was a big hole in the bottom.

“They forgot to do the same to theirs,” said Bob, “so we’ll relieve them of it.”

They got into the rowboat and rowed leisurely down the river, each taking turns at rowing except Bob, whose shoulder prevented. After a two hours row they came upon New York. They rowed up to the shore and were just fixing the boat where the owner could get it when some dark figures leaped out on them.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CAPTURE OF MR. HARDING

Returning to Dick.

When our hero heard the groan he was quick to act. He went down the stairs softly and looked through the window. The sight that met his eyes made him blink at first.

A man was lying on a couch, tied up, with blood flowing from his leg, and a man was looking into a drawer!

Dick tried to open the door, only to find it locked. He crept around to the back and tried the windows. Just as he was giving up in despair he tried a last window and it opened with a sharp creak. The man inside looked toward the door and his hand sought his gun. As nothing happened he turned back looking through the drawers. The man that was lying on the couch also had heard the creak and looked around anxiously. As nothing happened he lost heart again.

Dick crept into the window and softly came

across the floor. He could see the light in the other room through a crack and softly opened the door. The man's back was turned to him and Dick advanced without being seen. Just as he was half way across the room, and near the man, he turned and stared at Dick.

He uttered a cry and looked for his gun. Just then flashed through Dick's head of what he knew about football and he advanced on a run. Just as the man was about to shoot he was lifted from the floor and laid flat. He uttered a cry and tried to rise but this was prevented by Dick sitting on his chest. He tried to shoot his gun but Dick wrenched it from his hand.

"Now, then, get up," ordered Dick.

The man arose with a scowl on his face and then Dick said, "Now go over and cut that man's bonds."

He just then glanced at the man's face and exclaimed, "Why, you're Mr. Harding!"

"Yes, I'm Mr. Harding," said the man, "and what about it?"

"Go cut that man's bonds," was the order from Dick, who did not take heed of the man's last remark.

Mr. Harding went over and whipping out his knife cut the ropes that bound the man.

The man rose and heartily shook hands with Dick, whose gun was turned away, and Mr. Harding rushed for the door, unlocked it, ran out, and slammed the door shut again. Dick ran out after him with his gun tightly clutched in his hand.

Just as he got out a brick whizzed over his head and Dick started in the direction from where the brick came. With a leap he cleared the fence that blocked his way and saw Mr. Harding's figure outlined against the sky. The next instant it disappeared, but Dick knew that he had gone over a fence. He ran towards it and was soon over. He saw Mr. Harding running across a lot and he followed him.

"I wish it wasn't so dark," Dick muttered to himself. They were soon in a clear space and Dick fired at the retreating figure of Mr. Harding. The bullet whistled over his head and caused him to cower, but in an instant he was up again and ran, closely pursued by Dick.

They came out on the street and Mr. Harding ran up this. He soon came on an apparently deserted building. Mr. Harding ran into this and

up the winding stairs to the top floor. He ran into a room an instant ahead of Dick. It was a flimsy door that separated the two and Dick gave it one punch and it fell in. Mr. Harding had pulled himself up to the roof and Dick did the same. They both leaped over onto the next building, which was only the distance of a couple of inches. Mr. Harding ran to the very edge and looked over.

“Do you give up?” asked Dick.

Mr. Harding once more looked far down into the street and then said sullenly, “I guess I’ll have to.”

With Mr. Harding before him Dick jumped over onto the first building. Mr. Harding went into the room first. Dick followed just in time to see Mr. Harding disappear down the steps. He went after him and saw him rapidly moving up the street.

“I’ve got to get him,” thought Dick, with a pounding of his heart. He quickened his steps and the two were soon going along at a great speed. Mr. Harding crossed the cable street line and just as Dick was about to do the same a cable car came down the street and he had to stop. This gave Mr. Harding a good lead and he was nearly half a block ahead when Dick started after him

again. Mr. Harding soon turned down a side street, and started towards the fishermen's huts. Dick hurried faster and gained slowly.

They kept on and soon the blue ocean once more lay before them. They kept along the shore for awhile, and soon in the distance they could see the fishermen's huts. Mr. Harding swerved to one side and started up a hill. On the top was a pile of bushes. Mr. Harding gained these and darted into them.

"I hope I've not lost him," muttered Dick.

He gained the top of the hill a half minute behind Mr. Harding and darted into the bushes also. He suddenly saw Mr. Harding dart down the hill again and Dick went after him. They went farther into the fishermen's huts and Mr. Harding darted into the last one. He barred the door, which was a heavy one, and hard to break in.

Dick saw the top of the hut was covered with loose shingles and he got up there easily. He tore aside a few shingles and made a big enough hole to look through. He saw Mr. Harding look through the window and then mutter to himself, "Those kids ain't so smart as they think they are; I've thrown them off my trail."

He sat down on a bed and soon fell back and lay down. As a heavy snore emerged from him, Dick felt assured that he was asleep. He enlarged the hole and softly dropped through to the floor. He went over to Mr. Harding and put the cold barrel of the gun against his temple and said horsely, "If you make any noise I'll blow your brains out."

Mr. Harding got up and walked out. As he passed the lamp it suddenly fell and the kerosene was sprinkled over the place and it was soon in a blaze. Dick got out safely and hurried away with his prisoner. After a long walk they reached New York. Dick looked around for a police station but could not find one for awhile.

When he did he brought his prisoner in before the judge.

CHAPTER XX

A HAPPY REUNION

Returning to Bob and his friends.

When the men leaped on Mr. Pierson and the boys, they thought at first they were being attacked by the men they were after. All of a sudden Mr. Pierson gave a cry and shouted, "Don't, these are officers of the law." When the boys heard this they were too astonished to speak and were soon tied.

"Come with me," called one of the men, and the boys were hustled along. They soon reached the police station, and were lined up before the judge. The ropes were cut that bound them and they stretched their legs and arms freely.

"What is the charge that is brought against these boys and man?" asked the judge.

"He stole my boat," said the man that they seen shaking his fist at them.

"Why did you take this man's boat?" asked the judge severely.

They told him their story, and the judge turned to the man and asked, "Do you think that their story is true?"

"It may be and it may not be," was the answer, "but if it is true, why didn't they come and ask me to lend it to them?"

"The men would have been gone by that time," answered Mr. Pierson.

Just then there was a commotion at the doorway and Dick came in with Mr. Harding. He delivered the prisoner over to the judge and he was placed in jail after a little investigation.

Dick then turned to his chums and asked, with a laugh, "How in the world did you get here?"

They told him and Dick laughed again.

"I wish we knew where that man lives that we did this for," said Bob mournfully.

"I know," said Fred, with a laugh; "it was Mr. Brown."

"Mr. Brown?" said Mr. Pierson; "how do you know?"

"Because when Dick saved his daughter I had a good look at him."

"Do you know Mr. Brown?" asked the judge, who had heard their conversation.

"Yes, sir," answered Bob politely, "but not very well."

"Well, if he can prove you are innocent I'll let you go," was the reply.

"I'll go out and call him up," said Dick, starting for the door.

"Stop, here's a phone," called the judge, and he pointed to one on his desk.

Dick went to that and called him up. They were soon talking pleasantly over the phone, and in a few minutes Dick hung up the receiver and said, "He'll be down here as soon as he can get here."

After a tiresome half hour of waiting, a man came in and in whom they had no difficulty in recognizing as Mr. Brown.

After a little talk with the judge he came over to the boys and said, "You can come now."

As they were passing out of the door the man who had laid the charge against them came up and said with a sickly grin, "I'm sorry this thing happened, and if I had known I wouldn't have done it."

"Oh, that's all right," said Bob good-naturedly, "you never knew."

When they had gotten out on the street Mr.

Brown turned to them with a smile and said, "I'm sorry I gave you so much trouble."

"That's all right," answered George; "we wanted adventures and we got what we wanted."

They kept on talking and after a little while they reached the hotel.

"Come and see me sometimes," called Mr. Brown, as they went into the hotel.

They had a late dinner but ate heartily. They were all sleepy and as soon as they were undressed got in bed and fell asleep. Dick woke early and could not go back to sleep again, so got up and dressed. It was only six o'clock and he went out for a walk before breakfast. As he got out he saw the men they were after walking down the street.

"I wonder where they go all the time instead of staying at the hotel," mused Dick to himself; "I'll follow them."

Dick followed them for awhile and then he saw them go into a shop and then into a back room. Dick crept to the rear and inching up cautiously soon came upon a window where he could look in and see what the men were doing. He soon observed them go into a closet and bring out a huge

box. They dragged this to a bench and took out pieces of machinery.

"That's uncle's invention and they are making it," Dick said angrily.

He watched and saw them start to fix a machine, and eagerly looked at them for half an hour, then he started back for the hotel.

"Oh, the villians," he kept repeating to himself.

He soon reached the hotel and went up the stairs two at a time. He burst into his room, waking all his chums. He told them what he had seen and they all dressed rapidly.

"I'm going to get into that shop," said Bob to the others.

They were soon dressed and went down to breakfast. As soon as they had finished they rushed out and followed Dick to the men's shop. They crept around to the back and saw the three men working. They watched them for awhile and then Mr. Pierson said, "I'm coming here tonight and break the confounded thing to pieces."

"All I want is the document," said Bob; "without that they can't patent the machine."

The men kept on working and the boys started away again.

“I wonder what Sam and his bunch are doing?” asked George; “I’ll bet they’re not having a good time.”

“Neither is his father,” chortled Dick slyly.

They went back to the hotel and the rest of the day passed without adventure. That night they went out and went to the shop. It was empty. They went around to the back and broke a window and went in through it. Mr. Pierson had a searchlight and this gave them light. They found the closet and got down the box. They took off the cover, and when they touched the machine there was a loud crack and then a deafening roar!

CHAPTER XXI

THE DOCUMENT RECOVERED

As the deafening roar came the boys were all thrown to the floor. The machine was broken to pieces, and the boys were glad of that. They all rose except Fred.

"I wonder what's the matter with Fred?" asked George.

Mr. Pierson bent over him and then gave a cry of distress. The boys bent over and soon saw what was the matter, for a big piece of the machine had lodged in his scalp. Mr. Pierson brought out his knife and after a close examination managed to cut it out. As he cut it out Fred gave a low moan of anguish. They lifted him up gently and started out, when Dick called them and said, "There's a big crowd of people outside and those three men are with them."

"Then we can't go out that way," said Mr. Pierson, with anxiety, "so we'll have to go out this way," and he pointed towards the window. George

and Dick clambered out and Mr. Pierson and Bob gave Fred to them. Mr. Pierson climbed out and looked around for Bob, but he was over at the closet.

“Hurry up!” he yelled.

Bob grabbed something and ran towards the window. Just as he got out there was a trampling in the other room and they knew that the people had come in. They carried Fred and got him out in the street without being discovered and started for the hotel. They soon reached it and got Fred up to their room without any questions being asked, although many of the boarders stared at them.

After a little care Fred opened his eyes and stared around. “Why, how did I get here?” he asked, bewildered.

“We brought you here,” grinned Dick.

After a little while he was able to stand up.

“One bad thing about this is that we never got the document,” said George, with a wry face.

“Oh, don’t be so sure that we never got it,” said Bob with a laugh; “look at this!” and before the eyes of the astonished group he held up the missing document.

"Why, how did you get that?" asked Dick.

"I got it just when we started to leave," said Bob. "I was over at the closet when Mr. Pierson called me and then I found it."

The boys hurried out at once and sent the following telegram to Mrs. Morris: "Have recovered document—we'll be home Monday."

They came to their room and then heard the men come in under them. They rushed to the crack and looked through. They could see the men sitting in chairs with scowls on their faces.

"They don't feel very happy," said Dick with a snicker. They kept on watching and then they saw the men suddenly get to quarreling. Suddenly one of them pulled a gun and pointing it at the two pulled the trigger. The boys sprang up with horrified glances on their faces. They rushed down to the room and saw the man bending over his two wounded pals and he was rifling their pockets.

All the boarders had rushed to the room and were looking in. The boys edged their way through and went into the room. The man glanced up and on seeing the boys uttered an oath and dashed for them. The boys were unprepared for

this and they were thrown aside. The man dashed through the crowd and ran downstairs.

The man had let his pistol drop, and Dick had grabbed it and handed it to Mr. Pierson. They dashed off after the man, who was now at the foot of the stairs.

"Stop him!" yelled Bob to two men who were just coming in.

The men blocked the robber's way, but fear added strength to the man, who with a powerful blow of his hand knocked the others flat. He dashed out and went down the street closely pursued by the boys. They rushed on and suddenly the bandit turned down a side street, and before them the boys saw a policeman.

"Stop that man!" they called out loudly.

The policeman on seeing him ran up and swiftly had him collared. As the boys came up they told their story, and the man was brought back to the hotel. He was quickly proved guilty and the boys went back to their room. They undressed and went to bed. In a few minutes they were all sound to sleep.

The next day passed with nothing happening, and the day after that—which was Sunday—the

boys went to see Mr. Brown. They had a pleasant time and they went to the hotel late at night. They slept soundly and woke early the next morning. They went to the station and got tickets for Spencerville. In a half hour they were riding toward home. They were met at the station by Bob's mother, who had a small carriage with her. They all piled in and drove off to the farm.

"How's father?" asked Bob, after they had gotten in.

"He can sit up now, but he won't be wholly well for a long while," was the reply, "and he wants to see you."

The boys went upstairs and there they saw Mr. Morris propped up on a pillow reading a magazine. When he saw them he laid it aside and asked, "Well, boys, did you get it?"

"We always get what we go after," laughed Bob, "and I want you to meet Mr. Pierson, who helped us get it."

Mr. Pierson advanced, and when Mr. Morris saw him he gave a start.

"Why, Bill!" he exclaimed; "we haven't seen each other for a long time."

They shook hands warmly and the boys stood

aside, and wondered where the two had met before. The doctor came soon and the boys had to leave. When they got out of the room the boys asked, "Where have you met father before?"

"You'll soon find out," replied Mr. Pierson, his eyes twinkling, "and when you do you'll have adventures enough."

The boys dismissed this and nothing happened for a couple of days, but one day Mr. Pierson came to the house early and went upstairs to Mr. Morris' room. He stayed there for awhile and when he came down again his face was a study. When he saw the boys his face suddenly cleared, and coming up to them he said, with a smile, "You wanted to know, Bob, where your father and myself met before.

"Come upstairs and you'll soon find out."

CHAPTER XXII

CONCLUSION

The boys were more than willing to go up to hear about it and they followed Mr. Pierson in breathless silence. They went into the room where Mr. Morris was waiting for them. As they entered he turned on them and said:

“Well, boys, I don’t want to get you into any trouble, but I know you like adventures, and I’ll give you some. You probably want to know where Mr. Pierson and myself met. It was at my mine in Montana. We first met when he got a job from me. He was faithful and soon I let him have a half interest in the mine.

“There was another man there called Mike Martin, a regular villian. He was the foreman of the mine, and when I left for awhile he got all the men against me, so that when I came back I was driven away. Mr. Pierson stuck by me in it all.

“Now, boys, you don’t need to go, but I want

you to. Go to Montana with Mr. Pierson and help me get my mine back. Will you go?"

The boys were silent for a moment, and then Mr. Morris said, "I'll give you one week for your answer."

The boys went out of the room like someone in a dream. Mr. Pierson followed and asked pleasantly, "Well, boys, how about it?"

"We don't know yet," stammered Fred; "we want adventures but we don't know what to make of this."

"I have my answer now," said Bob, with a laugh; "it's 'yes.' "

"Same here," replied Dick.

"Boys, don't make any agreements that you will be sorry for later," implored Mr. Pierson; "take a week for your answer—there are many dangers you'll have to go through."

"Then we'll take time," said Bob, "but I'll help father any time."

"I'm sure you will," said Mr. Pierson, smiling.

The boys went out and then George turned on his chums and asked, "What do you make of this?"

"It all seems funny to me," said Fred, "but if

Bob and Dick are going, I'm with them."

"So am I," said George warmly.

They walked around for awhile, and while they talked about other things it was plain their minds were elsewhere. It was on the mine. They came home at noon and ate a hearty meal. That afternoon they went out once more, but nothing of importance happened. The next morning George stretched out and said with a yawn, "I wish there were some adventures; this is too dry for me."

"We'll have adventures enough when we get to Montana," said Bob, and this was to prove right later.

"Then you intend to go?" asked Fred; "then it's the same here."

Nothing happened for awhile, but one day as the boys were discussing the mine Dick nudged his friends and asked, "Do you see that man back there? He's been following us all the time, and has been listening to all we said."

"I'll go back and see what he is doing," said Bob, "and what he is about."

The man saw him coming and started away on a run. All the boys ran after him, but the man cleverly managed to get away.

"I'm going to tell father about this," said Bob, as he started for home.

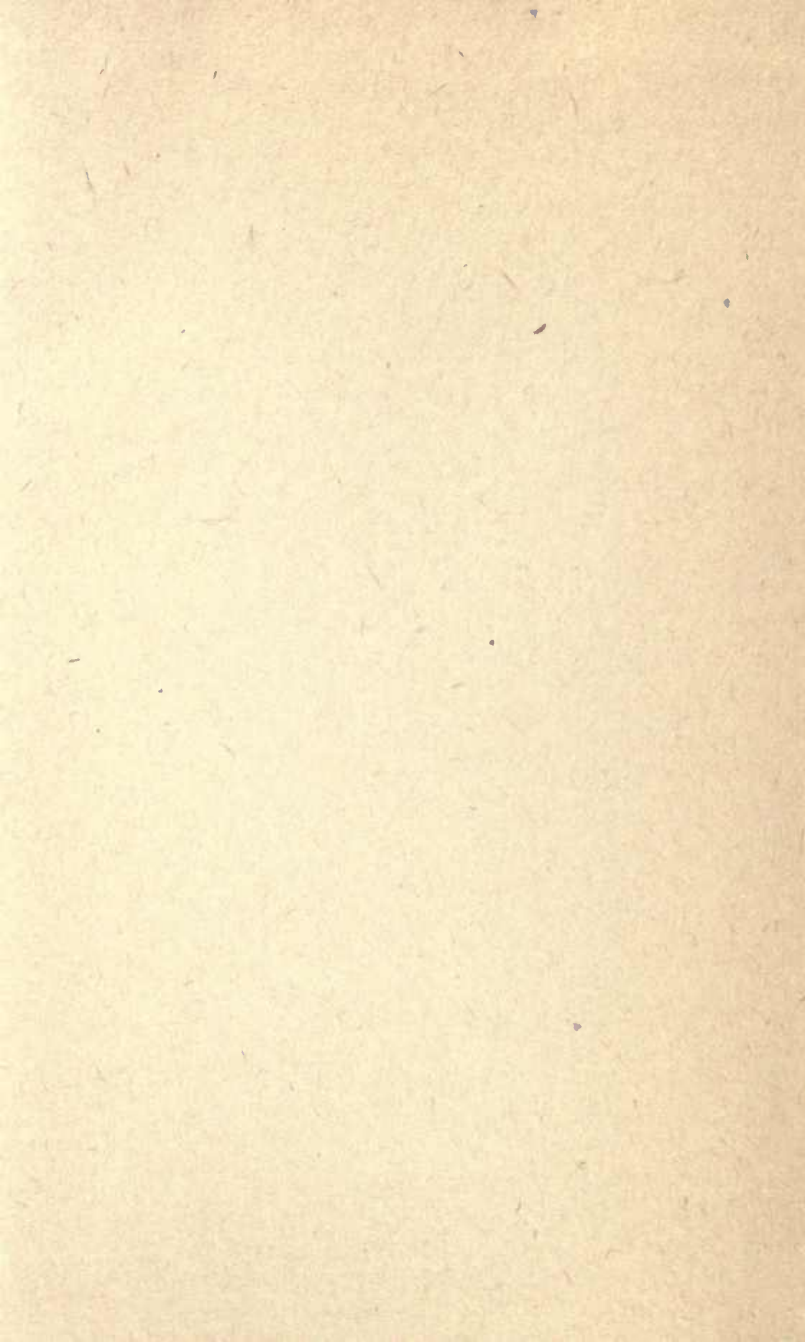
He soon reached it, and started for Mr. Morris' room. They saw him lying down on his bed and they told him about it. He appeared grave for a moment and then said, "Well, boys, if you are going, you'll start tomorrow."

"And we're going," echoed all the boys.

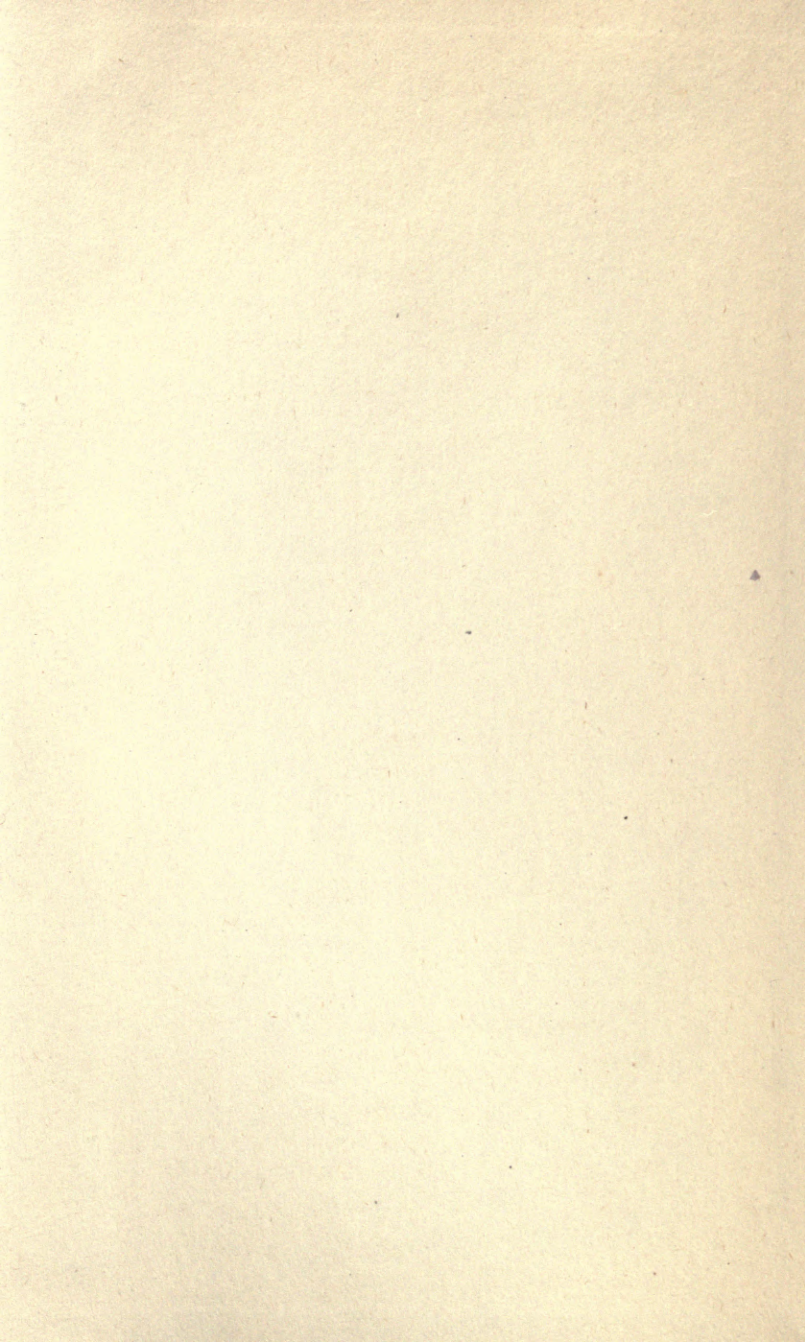
Their things were packed, then followed a restless night. Early next morning they were met by Mr. Pierson and the group started for the station immediately. Mrs. Morris had gone to the station to see them off, and as the train rolled out she called, "Good-by, boys!"

And now let me say good-by to my readers until we meet these fine, brave American boys and Miss Alice, who will figure in many thrilling episodes in the pages of my next book, entitled "The Heavy Hand of Justice."

THE END.







MARCH 24TH, 1920. PHILADELPHIA

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